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The Week-end Review

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CONTENTS

	Page
COMMENTS	481
MR. CHAMBERLAIN	483
ECONOMIC SETTLEMENT? By Douglas Jay	484
A LONDON DIARY	485
THIS ENGLAND	487
A HUMBLE PETITION. By Sagittarius	487
PREVENTIVE INOCULATION. By Harry Roberts	487
NO FEAR. By Y. Y.	488
SIRENS. By G. W. Stonier	489
LETTER TO A COLLEAGUE IN AMERICA. By Stephen Spender	490
PLAYS AND PICTURES. By William Whitebait	491
CORRESPONDENCE	491
From the Lord Provost of Glasgow; Clive Bell; R. Rhees; M.B., B.Ch.; D. M. Anand; Lionel Mundy; R. A. Choudhary; E. H. Blakeney; Constance Lambert; A. Morgan Young; Dorothy Tarrant; Margaret A. Chambers; M. Snow; Rev. H. C. Alexander.	
BOOKS IN GENERAL. By V. S. Pritchett	494
REVIEWS:	Page
Wit Revived. By Cyril Connolly	496
Much Ado About Milton. By Peter Quennell	496
Kierkegaard. By Edward Sackville West	498
By-Words. By George Orwell	498
The Past Tense. By T. C. Worsley	500
Inside the Atom. By Olaf Stapledon	500
ABOUT MOTORING. By R. E. Davidson	501
WEEK-END COMPETITIONS	502
CROSSWORD	502
THE WEEK IN THE CITY. By Cynicus	503

THE WAR FOR OIL

A HUNDRED Nazi divisions are lined up along Russia's frontiers. That more than any consideration of ideology accounts for Molotov's visit to Berlin. Nazi propaganda paints a picture of portentous announcement, of collaboration stretching from the Bay of Biscay to the Pacific, of joint German-Russian moves as far as India. Stalin is nobody's fool, but, it is thought, if he believes in German victory and fears a German attack he may like the idea of a free hand in Persia and a further assurance of neutrality. China and Japan may also come into the picture. German advice in Tokio seems the probable explanation of the Japanese withdrawal from Kwansi. If Japan concentrates on the Dutch East Indies and threatens British and American interests, a larger part of the American war effort may be diverted to the Pacific. Germany is now relying largely on the submarine siege of Britain.

The Germans do not underrate their task in providing for all Europe during this hard winter to come. Molotov's queue of European experts points primarily to a Balkan deal and an effort to organise the food and other resources of the great Continental *bloc* into a single supply. Maximum Russian aid is demanded. But Germany's most burning question is oil; all the more as Britain bombs her synthetic oil plants. This winter Germany must not only carry on the air war against the R.A.F. but supply oil to Italy (which last winter still piled up overseas supplies), keep a minimum of oil-driven transport going in France, Belgium, Holland and Scandinavia, and, in addition, build up reserve stocks of oil for the great sea and air war, a real petrol war, which must break in the spring. In fact, Germany needs all the Rumanian oil and Russian oil besides. One of the least excusable British failures in this war is that Rumania's oil plant has not been put out of action as it was in the last war.

Access to oilfields is only half Germany's battle. The oil must also be transported to the West. There are several routes for the transport of Rumanian oil: the railway through Yugo-Slavia, that through Hungary, and the mountainous railway now running through Russian territory from Cernauti to Lvov, which last winter proved entirely unsatisfactory. The great waterway of the Danube may always freeze early. Last winter, when British and French capitalists still had a say in Rumania, Germany's quota of Rumanian oil was only 130,000 tons monthly. Yet transport did not reach this amount. It is out of the question that the whole Rumanian output of 500,000 tons monthly, together with supplies from Baku, can be brought to Germany by the overworked Balkan and Russian railways. In addition, British bombing of railway junctions from Mediterranean bases could cause dangerous blockages. These factors make it essential for the Germans to drive further East and safeguard themselves by gaining (a) control of the Dardanelles, (b) of the Turkish and Greek seaboards. Then both Russian and Rumanian oil supplies can be brought by sea in tankers to Yugoslav and Italian ports, especially to Trieste. Hence the Italian assault upon Greece, Comrade Molotov's summons to Berlin, and the Nazi request for Russian co-operation in forcing the Turks to yield control of the Dardanelles, perhaps first to a joint Nazi-Russian-Turkish Commission.

Not all goes smoothly for Hitler. Like Stalin's miscalculations in Finland, Mussolini's initial failures in Greece have given Britain a fortunate respite and the blow to the Italian navy must upset many Axis plans. There is still time to bring down the Turks on the British side by swiftly occupying Syria and mobilising the resources of the Middle East and India behind Turkey's rear.

A more dynamic policy in Asia and the Middle East is demanded. No dreary parade of Indian Princes and those more reactionary Arab nationalists who already suspect British weakness can cover up the absence of such a policy. It is true that great efforts have been necessary to defend Egypt and that the loss of France has upset all naval and strategic plans in the Mediterranean. But this does not account for the continued friendship of the Foreign Office towards Vichy France and Franco, nor for the deplorable policy foreshadowed in the four years sentence on Nehru. Britain still has time for an imaginative plan of mobilising the whole Middle East and India to fight against the Nazi advance.

Economic Imperialism

If the British Government wishes to prove that we are not fighting an "Imperialist war" it should at once publish and act upon the report of the Commission of Inquiry which investigated the recent riot at the N'kana Copper Mine in N. Rhodesia. This mine is owned by the Rhokana Company, one of the prosperous Chester Beatty group. During this riot 14 negroes were killed and 20 injured. The Commission has now completed its report. Its members are known to take the view that the riot resulted from the holding of a pay parade of strike breakers while a strike was going on. The report is understood to recommend a number of important reforms. They concern wages, overtime, education, compensation, housing, the cost of living, and mining safety. Though the companies concerned are understood to be acquainted with the Commission's recommendations, there is nothing to show that they have yet put them into effect. These concerns are now selling copper almost entirely to the British Government. And they are not doing at all badly out of it. Having enlarged their capital by big bonus issues in 1937, Rhokana was still able to pay a dividend this year of 40 per cent. and Roan Antelope, another member of the group, of 20 per cent., despite meeting income tax and E.P.T. on a scale which the companies bitterly complain is excessive. Indeed their directors seem much more anxious to gain further E.P.T. concessions from the Chancellor of the Exchequer than to carry out the Commission's recommendations. Questions in Parliament are expected, but if the M.P.s are worth their salt, they will do more than ask questions. This is a test issue for Labour.

Contradictions and Indecision

Surely Mr. Bevin was too optimistic when he asserted in Bristol that we have worked out a complete plan for war mobilisation? Subsequently he promised that in six months we would overtake Nazi production if we didn't weaken. But our production cannot be sufficiently increased without a reorganisation both of the productive system and of the system of civilian consumption. The increase in our war effort needed to increase our striking force adequately is at least another £1,000 millions per annum *at present prices*. This is quite clear from the figures quoted in this column two weeks ago. The latest batch of measures of Mr. Bevin's Ministry should produce some useful results in organising man-power. Last week the reservation age limit for the printing workers was raised from 30 to 35. Printing workers are the only ready reserve for quick training of setters and other skilled tool-workers. The most acute bottleneck in the way of expanding armaments output has been the dearth of these categories of skilled workers. The Ministry by their measure show an increased readiness to retain and use the best human material. But there are still many grumbles from employers and Trade Unions. Mr. Bevin promises to get in touch with the Board of Trade with the view to mitigating the effects on employment of recent measures. If one reflects that full economic mobilisation would imply the absorption of some 4 million women and 800,000 unemployed (mostly from the wrong trades) as well as the retraining of about another million males one realises how far from adequate our effort still is. Germany has 200 training centres, some 20,000 instructors, a compulsory labour service of 500,000 and over 2,000,000 foreign war-prisoners and workers in industry and agriculture. She retrained over a million and a half workers, absorbed 200,000 women in a year. Commissions are visiting factories to comb out all skilled workers (as well as tools) to permit maximum dilution. Full payment is made to trainees and allowances are paid to dependents. And Mr. Bevin appeals to the unemployed to form labour reserves for emergency purposes. Mr. Macmillan appeals for machine-tools and Lord Beaverbrook for shooting brakes and luxury cars (for otherwise we should be forced to buy in America). There must be a speedy reshaping in the policies of several departments if heroism at the bottom is not to be wasted by the failure to coordinate and organise at the top.

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The Voice of Parliament

Last week the public was made aware of the continued existence of Parliament. Mr. Churchill gave one of his surveys of the progress of the war, and that, and not much of the subsequent debate, was reported. The quite erroneous impression was given to the public that Parliament was content. A number of M.P.'s, including some in the Services, came from long distances. They listened to a statement which contained little that they could not have deduced from the press and from the wireless. Mr. Aneurin Bevan tried to begin a serious discussion by asking for some explanation of the strange representations to the Soviet Union concerning the Danubian negotiations, and by asking for information about the happenings in Tangier. Mr. Churchill gave no explanation on these points. Mr. Lees-Smith rubbed in Mr. Churchill's point about the necessity of Britain using West Irish harbours to counteract the growing submarine menace. Mr. Bellenger, who spoke as a man with a Service record, urged the necessity of stating our war objectives. He remembered that the first object in this war is to destroy the Nazi regime, and to fraternise with an insurgent German people. Mr. Wedgwood was passionate and romantic. Like the Prime Minister he sees everything in national terms, and responds to the great Liberal phrases with all the alacrity of the nineteenth century. He wanted to add to the splendours of ancient Rome by supplying Mussolini with more ruins; he also wished to preserve some picturesque ruins in London as memorials of our great struggle. Then Mr. Hore-Belisha spoke. His words had the authority of an ex-Minister of War; the tone of his speech was, indeed, much like those with which Mr. Churchill was accustomed to enlighten the House before the war. He talked with great realism about the Near East and urged, as we have urged in this paper, that Syria was the key and that nothing can be done as long as we fail to realise the difference between friends and enemies. Our diplomacy has been "a dismal chronicle"; it has failed to bring Turkey in; it is apparently content for Franco to take Tangier; it flatters Pétain; it has allowed the Rumanian oilfields to fall into German hands, and it offers the world no future except a victory, which in Mr. Churchill's speeches has advanced from 1941-42 to 1943-44. He quoted Mr. Churchill in an article written before he was Prime Minister, complaining that the House of Commons had "declined in liveliness and debating power. The bulk of its Members became functionaries to register the will or lack of will of party leaders." Then Mr. Quintin Hogg side-tracked the debate by raising an irrelevant issue; a number of members protested and Mr. Aneurin Bevan pointed out that the right to introduce a new topic in a debate on the Adjournment could always be used to divert criticism from any member of the Government. He pointed out that critical speeches had saved the country in the last twelve months. "It was only the other day that the Prime Minister himself lost his temper in a most undignified manner over the Swinton Committee, and rebuked us for discussing it; three weeks later he did what we wanted him to do, and altered the Committee, putting on it members who were more worthy representatives of the nation." He pointed out the dangerous deficiencies of our propaganda and foreign policy (a matter on which Commander King-Hall also had interesting observations to make), and in the strongest terms, which were endorsed by other Members of various parties, urged the danger of allowing the House of Commons to be "treated like the Reichstag, to assemble to listen to a long speech by the Prime Minister, and say 'Amen,' and then go home."

There was much that was constructive as well as critical in this debate. There was no hostility or captious criticism of the Prime Minister, but there was real alarm and distress that no Minister of the Crown answered the questions raised, or replied to the suggestions and criticisms of the representatives of the nation.

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Economic Notes by an Industrial Correspondent

The abolition of the household means test is a cause for rejoicing, but for how much rejoicing it will not be possible to say until the requisite legislation has been passed and the U.A.B. has drawn up the new regulations under it. Mr. Churchill's statement has left a good many points far from clear. What we do know is that, in future, the head of a household who claims assistance on behalf of himself and his dependants will have to make a statement of an income belonging to himself, his wife and the dependants on whose behalf he claims, but not of other members of the household on whose behalf no claim is made. This, however, does not mean that the existence of these other persons will be disregarded. On the contrary, each of them will be supposed to be making a standard contribution towards the rent and other household expenses, whether he is in fact doing so or not. Presumably if one of these other members of the household is himself unemployed and not entitled to ordinary benefit, he will make his own claim to the U.A.B., quite independently of the claim made by the head of the household. But all that Mr. Churchill promised under this head was that " no applicant without resources of his own will be left dependent on other members of the household for means to buy clothing and other necessary personal requirements." This is far from explicit; and it may be that there is a big tussle coming, both over the terms of the Bill, when it is produced, and over the draft regulations on which the U.A.B. has already been told to begin work. Meanwhile, it is amusing to find the *Times*, and other newspapers which have been staunch upholders of the means test in its existing form, discovering at this eleventh hour that " it had the unavoidable character of an inquisition into affairs which are personal and in normal circumstances private." and that to this primary objection " there was added the complaint of its inequity." Just so. But how soon would the *Times* have made this discovery if there had not been Labour Ministers in the Government to press it home? We hope they will continue to press—hard enough to ensure that the family means test is made an end of in practice, and not merely in principle.

* * *

More is at last being done by the various Government departments to make use of the services of small firms, and there are even some signs that the provincial area machinery is beginning to work here and there, and that small businesses are being helped to collaborate in producing supplies. There is also a tendency to look less askance at machines that are not quite up to date, or not 100 per cent. suitable for the jobs for which they can be used or adapted; and there is even the dawning of a realisation that we cannot expect to train additional workers as long as we refuse to set aside any adequate supply of machines to be used for training. So far, so good; but the pace of reformation is much too slow. There are, moreover, difficulties over the financing of small firms which want to extend or adapt their factories for war purposes. If such firms ask the banks for accommodation, they are apt to get the answer that there is no guarantee either that their work will be passed by the Government inspectors (who are still inclined to insist on too high a standard of *finish*, as distinct from practical efficiency), or that they will get renewals of their contracts after completing the first batch. Discontinuity in contracts is fatal to sound financing, because the initial cost of new machines or adaptations clearly needs spreading over a sequence of orders. It would be a good deal better—if the Government will not adopt the really sensible course of taking over the war industries altogether—for the supply departments themselves to undertake the job of providing capital in these cases, under due supervision, instead of leaving it to the banks or to private finance. The departments would then have a direct interest in preventing waste of resources; and it would be much easier to pool the skilled labour and plant resources now wastefully isolated in separate firms, and to bring about a real mobilisation of the production power of the smaller establishments, which are also in general the least vulnerable to air attack. The final solution is financial and technical pooling on a nation-wide basis.

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MR. CHAMBERLAIN

No Prime Minister in our history has excited such extravagant praise or such bitter animosity as Mr. Chamberlain. " Next to Our Lord," said one speaker, " I think Mr. Chamberlain is the greatest man who has ever lived in the world." On the other side Mr. Chamberlain was accused of deliberately deceiving and betraying the nation, of being a Fascist at heart and conspiring with Hitler to destroy the liberties and independence of Britain. History will not confirm either of these views. They are the reflections of a deep moral and social conflict, not objective or sober estimates of a man who was no genius, but certainly honest and courageous. The emotional struggle of an epoch crystallised round Mr. Chamberlain. He became a symbol. It will be long before men can see and judge him dispassionately.

Like his father, Mr. Chamberlain seemed indifferent to criticism. He was cold in manner and clumsy in personal contacts; he had, nevertheless, the faculty of rousing strong affection and admiration among a few who knew him well. He was an obstinate man and a rigid party politician; he only modified his policy when the whips reported an ominous change of feeling among the Conservative rank and file. After the extravagant adulations that followed Munich, it is not surprising, perhaps, that he developed what one of his former colleagues called a curiously " mystical attitude to his functions." That he showed great determination and independence when he took the aeroplane to Berchtesgaden is beyond dispute. He saw that the old methods of diplomacy would land us into war; he truly represented the nation in breaking with tradition and running risks to prevent it. About the sincerity and depth of his loathing of war there can be no doubt. It is clear too that Mr. Chamberlain sincerely believed that he was God's instrument to preserve the world from the unspeakable disaster into which he afterwards led us. He may have been influenced by some of his close associates who held the Buchmanite view that international problems can be simply and safely solved by the personal collaboration of God-guided heads of States. In any case he had a somewhat naïve faith in his individual power with the Führer. He seems for the moment really to have believed that he had achieved peace in our time.

Before Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister, his reputation was securely founded. His political speeches and his record in local government, his achievements as Minister of Health and as Chancellor of the Exchequer reveal him as a hard-headed business man who viewed a bit of the road in front of him with singular clarity, but who wore blinkers to protect his vision from the irrelevancies of a wider horizon. The very antithesis of Lord Baldwin—" that pale reflection of everyone's perplexities," as Mr. Churchill once called him. Lord Baldwin was perplexed because he saw so many things that were beyond Mr. Chamberlain's range. If Mr. Chamberlain saw part of life clearly, Lord Baldwin saw the whole vaguely. Lord Baldwin is an even more insular man than Mr. Chamberlain, but he could not have said that the Czechs were a distant people of whom we knew nothing. He would have been aware of the repercussions of that statement. His mind, as Mr. Attlee once put it, " was tuned in to the National wavelength," whilst Mr. Chamberlain's " never got beyond Midland Regional." Lord Baldwin would not have had the decision nor the effrontery to go to Munich, pass over the Czechs bound hand and foot to their enemy and then to say that it was " up to the Czechs." He would have had scruples and conflicts which it was Mr. Chamberlain's singular strength to be without. Mr. Chamberlain had no antennae, no intuitive perception of the minds of other people. If he aroused anger he assumed that it was the result of party rancour or personal animosity. He was astonishingly sure of himself He regarded his critics as merely contumacious. Only a very unusual man could have departed so abruptly from the tradition of the country of which he was the head; only a very tough and unresponsive man could have tried to take out of English politics that moral and romantic flavour which has always been their chief characteristic.

When Mr. Chamberlain became Premier in 1937, the most menacing problem was the arrogant ambition and growing strength of Nazi Germany. Mr. Chamberlain agreed with Mr. Baldwin and with most of us in desiring to avoid a second Anglo-German war. British Big Business had come, a generation too late, to accept the original thesis of Norman Angell, that another war would be suicide to victor and vanquished alike. War meant the indiscriminate destruction of life and property; it would lead to revolution. For the first time capitalists became pacifists. Some would add that they wanted war with the U.S.S.R. There is no reason to think Mr. Chamberlain, who

represented British Big Business, had any such deliberate intent. True he was a bitter opponent of Russia and refused offers of Soviet collaboration; true his Czechoslovakian policy would have made better sense if he had plotted a German attack on Russia. But all the evidence suggests that he was unconscious of the repercussions of what he was doing. He never took seriously the aspirations of the post-war world to banish war; he was content to believe he had kept Britain out of it.

Mr. Chamberlain claimed that his policy was realism. German expansion, he thought, had become inevitable; Germany was hemmed in by French alliances; it would be wiser to make concessions where our power was limited, rather than to wait for an explosion which would reveal our weakness. Expansion to Mr. Chamberlain meant a sphere of economic influence; he was shrewd enough to know that in the modern business world, ownership of territory is not important as long as there is a monopoly of investment. Why should Birmingham Ltd., and Berlin Ltd., fight again? Each could have its economic *Lebensraum* and another world war could be averted. One could say paradoxically that Mr. Chamberlain was an unconscious Marxist. He assumed that everyone, including Hitler, is swayed by considerations of economic advantages and that Nazi Germany was what Hitler pretended it to be—a reconstructed capitalism intent on extirpating Bolshevism. Had his diagnosis been correct there need have been no war between a capitalist Britain and a capitalist Germany. Hitler in that case would not have broken his word and marched to Prague without informing us (this was the actual breach of his pledge to Mr. Chamberlain) just at the time when an F.B.I. mission was fixing up a re-distribution of markets in Berlin. The truth, which Mr. Chamberlain was curiously late to observe, was that Nazi Germany had reverted to an earlier conception of conquest. Hitler hated finance-capitalism; he was not a Buchmanite; he was not a disciple of Norman Angell. He saw no reason why war should not pay the victor if he took the spoils of conquest and made slaves of the conquered. Hitler is not an economic man.

History seldom allots to national leaders that large measure of responsibility which contemporaries assume to be theirs. Macaulay's New Zealander, looking at the ruins not merely of London, but of Europe, will recall Mr. Chamberlain's name merely as one of the politicians of a dying age who tried vainly in blindness and perplexity to maintain a social system that was obviously doomed. Historians will note that the damage was done long before Mr. Chamberlain took power; they will see him as the spokesman of that group of unimaginative business men who had ruled England since 1919. They will remark as a curiosity that at a late date Mr. Chamberlain *deliberately* adopted a personal policy; that in his effort to cut the tangled knot of diplomacy and save mankind from catastrophe he put aside advisers who at least knew something of the European map, dismissed a popular Foreign Secretary, and appointed as his confidant a man as ignorant of international politics as he was himself. They will note with surprise that the man who had boasted of peace at Munich, six months later guaranteed Poland and committed Britain to the war that he claimed to have avoided. They will regard as even less explicable Mr. Chamberlain's sudden declaration that he had been converted to the policy of Collective Security, for whose destruction he had so large a measure of responsibility. Finally they will give it up in despair when they read that the Prime Minister who made this remarkable *volte face* remained in office to carry through the policy he had derided and to lead the nation from one disaster to another in a war which he had failed to prevent and prepare for. They will rightly see in these paradoxes more than the miscalculations of a statesman who, in courage and ignorance, assumed too much responsibility; they will find in them the bankruptcy of an age and the doom of a social structure. They will note in the war of 1914-18 the beginning of the end of a system of nations claiming sovereignty for themselves even while the wireless and the aeroplane rendered them obsolete. They will see all the evil inheritance of hatred and jealousy incorporated in Versailles, and from the sabotage of the League and the hypocrisies of the disarmament and economic conferences they will deduce that whether Mr. Chamberlain or another led in Britain, or Hitler or another nationalist leader arose in Germany, the antiquated international and economic system was doomed to extinction. Inevitably Mr. Chamberlain will look to them less important than he does to us who suffer from his mistakes. They will recognise him for a man of unusual integrity, obstinate courage and restricted sympathies who tried, with very little imagination and no success, to preserve a *status quo* which had lost its historic value and which should long before have been changed. Mr. Chamberlain was a good, narrow and limited man. His failure is that of his class and generation.

AN ECONOMIC SETTLEMENT?

THROUGHOUT the summer the Government has been more concerned with increasing production of war materials at any cost than with keeping the economic mechanism under control. And, on the whole, the uprush of prices, which began with disconcerting suddenness at the first outbreak of war, has been held pretty well in check by the various instruments of control.

But in the last few weeks we have had some unpleasant reminders of the way in which costs and prices can force each other up if the process once gets out of hand. Higher railway charges, higher steel prices—this was a particularly steep rise—and higher coal prices have been announced in quick succession. If this goes on, wages, unemployment benefit, pensions, etc., may again have to be raised. It is a bit of a shock to the public to discover that higher steel and coal prices now lead automatically to higher railway charges, and higher railway charges equally automatically to higher steel and coal prices. Yet that is substantially the fact. The joint effect of the agreements for determining prices which these three great industries have separately negotiated with the Government is that the price of each must with mathematical certainty push up the price of the other in a sort of infinite regress.

How did such a ludicrous arrangement ever come to have the sanction of our official economic controllers? In this very simple way. Each industry has persuaded the authorities that it must be given the power to pass on the whole of its increased costs to the consumer of its products. The railways have actually gone one better than this. They have induced Parliament to agree to an arrangement by which the companies simultaneously pass on the whole of their higher working costs and reap the benefit of higher receipts in the form of actually bigger profits. Most of the other organised interests are content, at least in principle, with the maintenance of their profits at the pre-war level.

If the shareholders in each industry thus seek to maintain their pre-war income, at a time when the goods available for consumption in the community are falling, the inflationary process will inevitably get us in its grip. For that process, regarded from one point of view, simply consists of a simultaneous attempt to shift the inevitable loss on to someone else. Each interest has a most plausible defence for its activities. It argues that it did not start the process and cannot therefore be blamed for protecting itself. That is what the railways and the steel industry—whose profits have also increased remarkably in the last few years—are telling us with a great show of virtue. But the real origin of the inflationary pressure which now again threatens us is precisely this attempt of each interest to maintain its income at a pre-war level. Oddly enough, our statesmen—and economists, too—insist on this most pointedly when they are giving advice to the workers. They argue—Lord Simon used to frequently when Chancellor of the Exchequer—that the workers must not expect rises in wages sufficient to offset the higher cost of living, because there simply are not enough goods to consume. The employers in the engineering industry are now actually using this very argument as an excuse for rejecting a claim by the workers for improved conditions. And something of a crisis in the industry is threatened as a result.

Yet the same principle has been ignored in the Government's dealings with the great organised interests. From henceforth it should be recognised. In negotiating future price agreements with the railways, steel, coal, shipping, cement, and other great industries, the "controls" should clearly lay down that the shareholders are entitled to pass on a part, but only a part, of higher war costs to the rest of the community. That should be made a leading principle of our wartime economic policy. It should be the first line of attack on the new rise in the cost of living with which the second winter of war is now threatening us.

The second line of attack must be an altogether bolder effort to curtail the spending of those with surplus money incomes. This can be achieved partly by more rationing and standardisation of commodities, by a reinforced savings campaign, and possibly by direct rationing of the amount of money which each of us can spend. But for a big part of the campaign we must still look to budget policy in the wider sense. We must do this, first, because an immediate financial problem faces us, and, secondly, because one cause of advancing prices is certainly still the pressure of the public to spend the huge sums of money which the Government is paying to it in incomes. If we examine most of the individual rises in prices, they may appear to be due to rises in costs rather than to pressure from the public to buy. But don't let us forget that these prices are only demanded by the various producing interests because they know the public will be willing to pay them.

And that is because the money incomes in the public's hands are larger than ever before.

The Exchequer is now paying out more than £2,000,000,000 a year in Government expenditure over and above tax revenue. This means that the country's money income is being raised by something like that amount—or nearly 30 per cent.—above the peacetime level. Naturally, this carries with it a purely financial problem, which reflects the economic problem, and can be expressed in this way. We are spending over £70,000,000 a week. We are raising in taxation less than £25,000,000 a week. Of the resultant gap of £50,000,000 or so, only about £25,000,000 is being covered by the borrowing of visible savings. Perhaps another £10,000,000 or even £15,000,000 a week is covered by the absorption of savings of which no figures are now published, such as borrowing from Dominion Governments and the sale of our securities in the United States and in Canada. But there is a gap remaining, which few people will estimate at less than £10,000,000 a week, that has to be financed by the borrowing of newly created money from the banks. Since July, when the new system of borrowing by way of Treasury deposit receipts from the banks was instituted, some £250,000,000 has been borrowed in this way. This is not necessarily an exact measure of the new money created by the banks and lent at interest. But it is a very large sum.

I believe that it would be perfectly possible to solve this financial problem, in a manner helpful to the efficiency of the war effort, and to the solution of the huge post-war reconstruction problems that will one day face us. But if we are going to do so we must recognise that the present growth of the national debt is an even greater evil than the threatened wartime rise in prices, since the post-war interest bill we are building up at the rate of £50,000,000 a year will, if left to itself, strangle post-war economic reconstruction at birth. We must also base the proposed financial settlement on a real agreement between classes, which we have not yet got, on the sharing of the war cost burden.

Leaders of the Labour Movement would, I think, agree that the temporary settlement effected when the new Government assumed office last May was only a makeshift one. The substance of this settlement was that, in return for a 100 per cent. Excess Profits Tax, the Labour Movement agreed to accept the Purchase Tax and to relinquish a great many normal restrictions on hours of work, etc. Sir Kingsley Wood then made a further gratuitous present to the property-owning class by suspending the Dividend Limitation Bill. This Bill was the one good part of Lord Simon's April Budget, and its removal has been one of the causes of the disappointing saving effort by the richer classes in the last three months. Meanwhile the 100 per cent. E.P.T. leaves the minimum of incentive to efficiency and economy in the minds of all but the most public-spirited men. The Purchase Tax is resented by the working class as a one-sided burden. And the unwillingness of any class to make a further big sacrifice until somebody else does so first means that we are piling up new debt and borrowing newly created credit at an unnecessary as well as alarming rate. The solution advocated by the rich is simply to impose a far heavier income-tax on all wage incomes. Any further taxation on the rich is resisted on the ground that total incomes of the rich are too small to pay for the war. As well might the inhabitants of, say, Nottingham argue that since their aggregate incomes were too small to pay for the war, nobody in Nottingham ought to pay taxes at all!

I suggest that a fair settlement is possible on the following lines—

(1) Let the rich agree to the immediate imposition, for the period during which we are borrowing for war, of a small percentage capital tax on big individual fortunes, which should yield £300,000,000 or £400,000,000 a year The tax would be payable in securities, so as to remove all difficulties of collection, and the securities would be held by the Treasury as a sinking fund against the rising national debt.

(2) Let the Labour Movement agree in return to the extension of income-tax to a wider class of wage-earners, with family allowances to ensure that children were no longer penalised by the tax.

(3) Let the Excess Profits Tax be lowered from 100 per cent. to 90 per cent. This would allow the efficient business man his "token" reward, without any substantial loss of revenue.

(4) Let the shareholding class, in return for that, agree to the reimposition of the Dividend Limitation Bill, which would ensure that incomes from excess profits were saved and lent to the Government.

(5) Let the rationing principle be carried further, so as to spread the necessary cut in consumption as equitably as possible.

Could not we, by some such settlement as this, overcome the present not insurmountable economic problem, and at the same time achieve a much more genuine degree of social justice and therefore national unity, which would be plain for all to see both at home and abroad?

DOUGLAS JAY

A LONDON DIARY

To separate the personal from the public life of a statesman is often difficult; it is more difficult than usual in the case of Mr. Chamberlain. That he led us disastrously is obvious; that his shy reserve and lack of personal magnetism made him an easy character to misunderstand is also clear. I know of one distinguished man who in the course of years of intimacy had come to feel a great respect and affection for Mr. Chamberlain, without even guessing until nearly the end of his life that the Prime Minister entertained a similar feeling for him. Mr. Churchill was much criticised, I think rightly from a public point of view, for retaining Mr. Chamberlain so long in his Cabinet. I believe that there was more than the obvious public reason that Mr. Chamberlain represented a section of the community whose co-operation for the time was indispensable; there was also the personal reason that Mr. Churchill's feelings about Mr. Chamberlain, which were certainly lurid enough at the time of Munich, changed completely after the experience of working in the same Cabinet. Labour Members of the Government, who bitterly abused him, also changed their minds when they worked with him. All his colleagues agree that he was an exceptionally able chairman of committee; one reason, as a friend pointed out, was that he could deal admirably with facts on paper. He missed all the subtleties, but he could keep a committee to an agenda. He was a man of the highest personal integrity, sensitive to attacks and eager for affection. There was little background to his mind except business. He had read little. No one is to be blamed for attacking Mr. Chamberlain as well as his policy, because it was so peculiarly a personal policy. He took his own line; he was contemptuous of opposition; he was obviously mistaken and floundered in a field where he was no expert. His persistence was incredible. His realism was a dreamland. He supported every obstructive vested interest; many of his associates were much less honest than he; he seldom appointed anyone except a reactionary of second-rate ability. He had not the knack of sympathetic speech or appealing argument. If, when he had come back from Munich, he had said that the alternative was war and that war would be even worse, and left it at that—which was what Sir Samuel Hoare did—he would have won far more support; but his claim to have brought a new era of peace when we all knew that he had lost the last hope of avoiding war, and had passed our best friends over to the Gestapo, was more than many of us could stand. His complacency was exasperating. Could it be as absolute as it seemed? Was it a mask? I asked a friend who saw much of him. No, I was told, it was unshakable and absolute. He was quite single minded. Until Prague he never doubted for a moment that he was right and would succeed. Mr. Chamberlain has certainly been misunderstood, and often been abused for the wrong reasons. He believed in what he was doing; his primary desire was to avoid war. His pacifism was real; it was not a disguise for a Machiavellian plot as some of his critics imagined. Like Mr. Baldwin and the rest of us, he knew what this war would be. It was because he put the preservation of peace first, that Mr. Baldwin was anxious for Mr. Chamberlain to succeed him. It remains true that his premiership was the most disastrous in British history.

* * *

It was his Spanish policy that most of us found the hardest to forgive. After the League had been scrapped, Russia rebuffed, and all the other chances missed, when we actually reached the point of Munich it had become true that war was the alternative. That was never true about Spain. I believe that this war might have been averted, that France might still be independent and that the prospects of freedom in the world would have been infinitely more bright, if Britain had not played the Fascist game in Spain. It is in connection with Spain rather than Czechoslovakia that my own impression of Mr. Chamberlain is most vivid. I had been in Barcelona on Christmas Day, 1938; Italian and German aeroplanes made their daily raids; Italian guns could be heard in the mountains; Negrin had not pretended that defeat could any longer be avoided. I crossed to Tunis, where M. Daladier made a speech about the French Empire in which he forgot Spain and also the Arabs who were listening to him. He spoke much of French glory and looked, as a friend with me remarked, like a man who had a murder on his conscience. I went on to Rome and was among the onlookers when Mr. Chamberlain arrived and walked past us with the Duce. In the evening there was a grand reception and much talk of the gentleman's agreement with Mussolini and of our friendship with Italy. Before he left, Mr. Chamberlain saw some of us journalists and said that his principal fear for Europe—he seemed to think that we had cleared up our immediate difficulties with Germany—was the Spanish war. In a word, he thought it necessary for the Spanish

Republic to be quickly destroyed so that his agreement with Italy might quickly come to fruition. Yet to me and many of my colleagues the war against Fascism had already been raging for at least 2½ years in Spain. To everyone except Mr. Chamberlain, Mussolini's game was obvious; no informed person could honestly doubt that he was Hitler's ally. Granted that Mr. Chamberlain believed that he was keeping the peace, grant, as I do, him all the integrity and sincerity in the world, agree that he loved birds and had all the domestic virtues—grant all that and it still remains difficult to dissociate the man from his policy.

* * *

An Englishman who has lectured much in all the forty-eight United States, and has been there during the last twelve months, sends some interesting comments on American opinion before the election.

> A fortnight in the Middle West, as far as Oklahoma, has been something of an eyeopener for me. I feel like saying to the bitter enemies of Roosevelt that if his administration has ruined God's Country, there are precious few signs of it in the interior, among these up-and-coming cities and small towns, and over the vast stretches of country that I have just travelled through by train and car and plane. The Willkie button was displayed everywhere, and among my audiences I found hardly a man or woman who spoke up for F.D.R. And yet I met only three or four who would say that Willkie had a fair chance of winning. He is putting extreme vigour into the campaign, is speaking with almost Bryan-like volubility, and having big crowds. Most of the audiences, however, seem bored by his speeches, which are now obviously ghost-written. For one thing, he has not learned to speak the mother tongue, even like a good Middle Westerner. He grows more reckless in attack day by day, and is giving unlimited promises of jobs, just like Huey Long—or Hitler himself. To the Press Club in Washington he gave an unreported address which many of the chaps said was "plain Fascism." Yet millions will vote for him in the belief that he is for the old American way, while F.D.R. wants to be a dictator!

* * *

No reading to-day is more fascinating than the life of Napoleon. After Austerlitz, Napoleon dominated just about as much of Europe as Hitler does now; he was checked only by the British fleet and by the refusal of some of those he had conquered or humiliated to accept his rule as permanent. He might have made it permanent perhaps if he could have forgone, even for a time, the instinct to trick, crush and humiliate. Fox wanted peace; he had always been against the war and had defended Napoleon. There was no peace in 1806 because Napoleon could not, or would not, for a moment understand his opponent's point of view, would not make any of the concessions which Fox thought necessary for honour. Before he died Fox declared that it was not these concessions themselves—the little affair of restoring the Bourbons in Sicily, for instance—that stopped peace with the French, but the "insincere way in which they act, that shows me they are playing a false game." In a word—and the whole story of Napoleon's diplomacy shows it—the Emperor never for a moment meant peace, he only meant a possible truce in which to prepare for further conquest. Quickly resentful, says Holland Rose, writing a generation ago, of any slight to his own honour, Napoleon's "bluntness of perception respecting the honour of others might almost qualify him to rank with Aristotle's man devoid of feeling. It is perfectly true that he did not make war on Prussia in 1806 any more than on England in 1803. He only made peace impossible." The story of his dealings with the unhappy King of Prussia produces another parallel. Forced at last to war after every kind of humiliation, the King could not bring himself to appoint to office the ministers who had opposed the appeasement policy. It is true that Haugwitz and Beyme (his advisers who had vainly tried to keep peace by giving Napoleon all he asked) "now expressed the bitterest hatred of Napoleon, as well they might for a man who had betrayed their confidence. But none the less the King's refusal to change his men along with his policy was fatal. Both at St. Petersburg and London no trust was felt in Prussia so long as Haugwitz was at the helm. The man who had twice steered the ship of State under Napoleon's guns might do it again. . . ."

* * *

Hilda Matheson, whose death has been too little noticed, was the remarkable woman who built up the intellectual reputation of the B.B.C. in the days when it was still at Savoy Hill. She was immensely energetic; she "knew everyone" at a time when Sir John Reith, whose first job was organisation, was still out of touch with the literary and educational world. She collected a brilliant staff; she brought to the microphone all the leaders of British thought. She was not always tactful; people said erroneously that her educational programme was "Left"—all they meant was that the Conservative assumption that society would always remain the same, was sometimes questioned by progressive broadcasters. Her departure from the B.B.C. was a disastrous turning point—part of the complacent reaction which began with the great economic slump and which lasted to the end of the Chamberlain regime. I have seen less of her, I regret to say, since she went to Chatham House and became immersed in native problems, but she carried into her new job the same qualities of inspiration, efficiency and sympathy.

* * *

There is one aspect of the proposed change in the Means Test which deserves comment. There was a tendency for young people to leave home to escape being mulcted from their scanty earnings for the support of elderly relatives. In effect they were splitting off from the parent company and forming a subsidiary round the corner. They were thus aping their betters by taking advantage of the legal dictum that a man is entitled to arrange his affairs so as to get the better of the Exchequer. It is perhaps the sad realisation that the sharp practices of slick legal advisers to the well-to-do seep down to the knowledge of underlings that has led to the proposed modification of the Test. One of these days the working classes, having acquired a real knowledge of company law, will start incorporating their back gardens as separate legal entities and claim rebates from the Inland Revenue for the failure of the antirrhinum crop. The outcry from the rich, who thought they had the copyright in these ideas, may then lead to some desirable reforms in the company and tax laws.

* * *

The object of punishment, we are told, is to deter wrong-doers. That, no doubt, is the reason for the £100 fine inflicted on the man who did not like a bomb in his house and carried it off to what he regarded as a safer place. He meant to get to St. James's Park, but dropped it, thereby inflicting a nasty bruise on his toe. In the end he deposited it near a church. According to the precedent of Little Matilda and other examples from cautionary tales, Providence should have stopped this kind of thing for good and all by a timely explosion. As Providence proved unreliable we have to thank the magistrate for seeing to it that bomb-carrying does not degenerate into a habit. After all, we are all heroes nowadays.

* * *

Two months ago I drew attention to the fact that the book *Heil Hunger!* written by Dr. Gumpert, giving a sensational picture of the deterioration in the health and standard of living in Germany under the Nazi regime, had been severely criticised as inaccurate and misleading by Dr. William Brend in the September issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. Dr. Gumpert has now replied to this attack and, while admitting minor statistical errors, still contends that his account is true and his conclusions warranted. Germany, he maintains, was a country of unusually high hygienic standards, and by many of the hygienic indices there has been a definite deterioration under Nazi rule. Dr. Gumpert was quoted on the wireless by Mr. Duff Cooper as if this deterioration was catastrophic. This is the point on which we require enlightenment.

* * *

In the debate which led to the downfall of the Chamberlain Ministry, Commander Bower, M.P., clamoured for the introduction of "a few cads" into the Government to ginger it up since, as he explained to the House, we were fighting for two thousand years of Christian civilisation. The honourable and gallant member got his new government and went off to serve in the Navy. Subsequently he made private representations to the First Lord, criticising the conduct of the Narvik operations and found himself demoted. As a result he has withdrawn from active service and reverted to his Parliamentary duties. In the debate in the House last week he complained of victimisation and Gestapo methods, and implied that he did not expect his earlier advice to be taken too literally.

* * *

"Life does not depend upon onions," Lord Woolton declared this week, in order to prepare us for the news that it may have to be carried on without eggs and bacon. This calls up to mind a story of the last war. "My people," said the statesman, addressing a haggard audience, "I realise your sufferings and your privations, and my heart bleeds for you. But I have this great consolation to offer you. You are a damn sight better off now than you will be this time next year."

* * *

I was walking along The Cut, Blackfriars, the other morning during a raid, when I met a very old woman with a crutch who was talking to any passer-by who would listen to her. "I'm going to live to a hundred and forty," she explained as I approached, "but all this—" (waving her crutch at the guns going off around)—"interferes with me."

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to Angus MacPhail.
All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C. 1.

The handing over of a bomb in a public-house was described at Westminster yesterday, when Michael Block, 39, machinist, of Fawcett-street, South Kensington, was remanded for 14 days on bail, charged with "committing an act in relation to a bomb (German) calculated falsely to suggest that it did not belong to His Majesty."—*Daily Telegraph.*

Mr. Lush resents the use of the lower part of the cemetery for the collection of articles essential to the manufacture of munitions. . . . The spirits of those loved ones whose remains rest in the cemetery, I am confident, rejoice that they are doing their bit in this endeavour by having the dump where it is, and I, with many others, do not think there is any necessity to change its location.—Correspondent in the *Weston Mercury and Somersetshire Herald.*

If the Germans are suffering from R.A.F. retributory bombing, it is because they have brought it on themselves, "As ye sow so shall ye reap," and because the British race is the appointed instrument of Divine retribution.—Correspondent in the *Glasgow Herald.*

What about Somaliland, the only part of the British Empire which has been taken by the enemy? The reason is obvious enough. Seven years ago our late Government refused to allow the entrance into Somaliland of British missionaries, and the preaching of the Bible, in spite of repeated requests to the British Governor that the Gospel message might be taken to the Somalis. Now Somaliland belongs to the Italians! "God is not mocked; what we sow, we shall reap."—Correspondent in the *Oxford Mail.*

This further bond between our two countries may prove a formidable obstacle to the enemy's designs, for although Italy introduced football many years ago, she does not understand cricket in any sense of the word.—Correspondent in the *Times.*

A HUMBLE PETITION

THE public we know is an ass,
Fit only for general suppression,
Its conduct incredibly crass,
Its chatter one huge indiscretion,
It has just enough wit to perceive
A rather acute contradiction
Between facts it is bound to believe
And the newspapers' rose-coloured fiction.

On Monday our forces advance,
On Tuesday the foe has retreated,
On Wednesday, prepared for this chance,
Our fortunate feats are repeated,
On Thursday we strike a hard blow
Our moves are completely effective,
On Friday, however, the foe
Has somehow attained his objective.

The news for our good is controlled
Though our views are, of course, not requested,
We know that all may not be told
Before it is well predigested,
But the experts have never found out
That nothing so daunts and depresses
As the news of an actual rout
After series of rumoured successes.

Our leaders we follow and trust,
Our Wellingtons, Nelsons and Chathams,
We are ready to face if we must
Being blown, undefeated, to atoms,
Our morale can withstand every knock,
We can meet each demand that arises
We could only succumb to the shock
Of a series of joyful surprises.

Though for the duration content
Not to ask for the rhyme or the reason,
We this humble petition present
(Though it may be regarded as treason)
That they ban as a public abuse
All boosting, bamboozling and bluffing—
We know we are merely a goose
But we beg to dispense with the stuffing. SAGITTARUS

PREVENTIVE INOCULATION

WE were late in devising protective measures against enemy bombs. Are we going to be equally late in devising protective measures against the epidemic diseases that play so large a part in determining the result of modern warfare? It has been said with probable truth that the real conquerors of Rome were not the Goths and the Vandals, but malaria and the plague; and Dr. Donelan, of the Ministry of Health, tells us that in 1552 Charles V was obliged, owing to the spread of typhus in his ranks, to raise the siege of Metz, thus saving France from destruction. During the Thirty Years War many European countries lost through epidemics from half to three-quarters of their populations. In their retreat from Moscow, stragglers from the French army spread disease all over Germany and other parts of Central Europe. In the American Civil War, the Federal army lost twice as many men from disease as from wounds. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 yielded parallel figures. Even so recently as the Boer War, the British army lost nearly double as many men from infectious disease as from wounds.

The present war differs in many ways from all previous wars on a parallel scale. For the first time, the civilian populations of all the countries actively engaged are, almost literally, in the front line. That is the new factor. Were England populated in the scattered way it was a few hundred years ago, we should not be subject to many of the risks to which we are now exposed. The existence of crowded cities made hygienically possible by elaborately organised and highly complicated sanitary systems offers to our enemies in time of war a vulnerable target. A high-explosive bomb dropped almost at random may easily blend our water supply and our sewage. A single case of cholera or of enteric fever may be more disastrous in such an eventuality than any immediate results of physical impact. Then, again, fresh dangers are introduced by the crowding together of enormous herds of people in caverns altogether unsuited for more than the shortest spells of human occupation.

The epidemic diseases to which the civilian population is likely to be abnormally exposed in the coming months are those the prevalence of which is associated with overcrowding, and the sanitary defects that generally accompany overcrowding. As things are at present, at any rate in the heavily bombed London areas with which I am specially familiar, many tens of thousands of people, old and young, healthy and sick, spend from twelve to fifteen hours out of every twenty-four huddled together anyhow in ill-ventilated holes and tunnels, the sanitary and other amenities of which have been accurately and impressively described in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION and elsewhere. I hope that by the time this article appears in print some of the worst evils will have been lessened, but I think it humanly impossible that any radical changes can be effected within a period measured by months.

Infectious diseases are spread in various ways; some by direct contact, notably those in which parasitic insects such as fleas and lice play the part of carrier; typhus and plague belong to this group, as do the skin diseases which these and other insects directly induce. Many other illnesses are spread through the air; the germs or virus being scattered by coughing, sneezing or even breathing. To this group belong the common cold, influenza, diphtheria, tuberculosis, whooping cough and measles. The germs associated with a third group commonly enter the body through the medium of food or water or milk, the outstanding examples in this country, so far, being typhoid fever and the paratyphoid fevers. Then, of course, there are infections specially associated with wounds, of which the streptococci and the tetanus bacillus are the commonest causes.

Against only a few of these disorders have we yet discovered immunising agents the efficacy of which is established beyond reasonable dispute. We can, however, by prophylactic inoculation reduce enormously both the incidence and fatality of the enteric group of diseases (typhoid and the paratyphoid fevers), small-pox, cholera, tetanus, and diphtheria. Take diphtheria. Immunisation against diphtheria has been carried out on a much larger scale in America than in this country. In 1935, there were, in New York, over a million children who had been immunised. The diphtheria incidence which, in 1929, was over 8,500 cases, fell to just over 1,000 in 1936; whilst the deaths from diphtheria fell, in that period, from 27 per 100,000 to 2 per 100,000. The corresponding figures for England and Wales, where no appreciable immunisation was carried out, are 32.8 and 31.8 respectively. In Montreal, among a population of 757,000 in 1928 when immunisation was commenced, there were 1,632 cases and 157 deaths from diphtheria. Both incidence and mortality fell *pari passu* with immunisation until in 1935 there were

183 cases and 21 deaths, approximately one-ninth of the figures recorded in 1927. Apart from statistics, what it may be asked is the case for prophylactic inoculation with serums and vaccines.

There are two basic facts familiar to everybody. One is that from most of our illnesses, whether we receive any medical treatment or not, we recover. In fact we recover from every illness we have except one, the fatal one. And the other fact is this; there are a number of infectious diseases from which after recovery from one attack, we rarely, if ever, suffer again, even if exposed to infection. From these two facts it is obvious that our bodies are possessed of considerable powers of resistance and that these powers are increased by successful use. Our wounds heal by processes in which our conscious will and the skill of the surgeon play but minor parts. Ambrose Paré, a famous French surgeon who lived many hundred years ago, used a phrase that has been often quoted: "I dressed his wounds, God healed him." This does not mean that the doctor's work is of no value or that it makes no difference; often it makes all the difference between victory and defeat. But the doctor's power depends almost entirely on the extent to which he understands nature's methods of healing wounds and overcoming disease. Only then is he in a position to help nature.

Confining our attention for the moment to those infectious diseases which are brought about by the invasion of the body by specific germs, little in the way of effective treatment was possible until some rational explanation was found for the fact that some people recover whilst others die from one and the same disease, and also for the fact that recovery from these disorders safeguards the individual from a future attack. Until quite lately lots of parents and not a few doctors thought it a good thing for a child to be exposed to all sorts of diseases such as measles and even diphtheria so as "to get it over"—that is to become more or less immune for the future. Long before vaccination was discovered as a safeguard against small-pox, inoculation with the actual germ of small-pox was widely practised. We have numerous records of such inoculation in Europe so long ago as the seventeenth century, and still earlier records of the practice in Asia. Inoculation was introduced into England by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the British Ambassador to Turkey, in 1717.

The science of immunology has advanced a long way since 1717. We know that the invasion of the body by hostile bacteria provokes the formation in the blood of certain chemical substances which tend either to kill the germs or to neutralise the poisons which they liberate. And the problem which the scientists set before themselves was to discover means for increasing the production of, or supplementing, the germicidal substances and anti-toxins automatically produced by the human body. As already said, such means are now available for preventing or limiting the attacks of several diseases to which we are likely to fall victim in the conditions that now obtain. It is held by many of us, therefore, that in districts (such as London) where overcrowding is pronounced and the epidemic risks are great all children should compulsorily be inoculated against diphtheria; and all older children and adults against typhoid and paratyphoid. All A.R.P. workers should also be inoculated against tetanus. The process is very simple and almost devoid of serious risk. Such artificial immunisation should not, of course, lessen either our efforts to maintain other sanitary services or our observance of those hygienic principles which serve us well in more normal times. HARRY ROBERTS

NO FEAR

"No credit to me," said the man who ran up a fire escape in Jermyn Street the other night and made off with a delayed-action bomb. "I just don't happen to be afraid. Cold-blooded, I suppose." Instead of recommending him for a medal, however, the magistrate held that it was an offence for a private citizen to remove a delayed-action bomb—it might have gone off; and he fined him £100. "I was going to dump the damned thing in St. James's Park," the man explained. "I put it down behind a church which had already been damaged. I thought it the safest place—away from dwelling-houses." Motives apparently do not count in wartime, however. Bombs must not be carried about by amateurs. This is an age of experts, and Tom, Dick and Harry must learn, it seems, to leave other people's bombs alone.

At the same time, I cannot help both admiring and envying this amateur bomb disposer. I should give a great deal to be able to say of myself: "I just don't happen to be afraid—that's all. Cold-blooded, I suppose."

I cannot remember a time when I was cold-blooded. I was beset with fears from my early childhood. There was a time when I was even afraid of mice. I was afraid of ghosts from the moment when I first heard of their existence. I was afraid of burglars from the moment at which I first heard of their's. How often have I looked into wardrobes and under beds in the expectation of finding an enormous criminal hiding there! What I should have done if I had found him I do not know. Screaming is not easy when the vocal cords are paralysed. Bedroom windows had also terrifying possibilities for my imagination. It seemed to me to be well within the bounds of possibility that a huge black man might be standing on the sill outside, waiting till my light was out to effect an entrance. Even when morning came, I often used to imagine a black man's eye peering through the chink at the edge of the blind. Why I was particularly afraid of black men I do not know, for I had been told many sentimental stories about slaves and how in any part of the world one of them had only to wrap himself in a Union Jack in order to be free for life. Probably, however, the fact that a white child's devil is black helped to colour these semi-nightmares.

The Devil himself, of course, I feared, and Catholics, and drunken men and mad beggars, of whom there were still a number going from door to door. Of detectives, too, I was scared. If, as we were throwing sticks and stones at a chestnut tree in the fruiting season, a boy called out "Nix! Detectives!" we all ran like hares till we were out of breath. I had also a horror of bulls, which I believed commonly went mad if they were driven through the streets of a city. Cows themselves, when met in a city street, were sufficiently like bulls to set me appealing for help to passers-by. In the country I was not quite so cowardly, as, when I met the wild beasts of the locality I was usually in the company of relatives who were afraid of nothing. Cows and calves I came to dote on; and I have even walked fifteen miles with a bull on his way to grazing. Still, there were perils even on a farm. A hen with a new brood of chickens could be very menacing, and the thought of the damage she might do by flying at my face often made me walk warily in her neighbourhood. A turkey-cock, bristling with all his feathers and gobbling at one's approach, was another bird to beware of. As for geese, who is there so cold-blooded as never to have been afraid of geese? I had heard of a gander's biting a child's finger off. To say "Boo!" to a goose was then regarded as the height of courage. In my own experience, I may say, I have never known a goose to do a human being an injury. But a gander lengthening his neck into a hiss unquestionably looks dangerous—dangerous enough to frighten any but a cold-blooded child.

Sheep as a rule were not alarming, though a friend told me that he had heard of someone who was bitten by a mad sheep. Rams were apt to charge unwary children, moreover, and were best avoided. Goats, of course, were creatures that made no pretence of being friendly to the human race. One felt particularly brave if one approached a tethered goat and seized him by the horns as he reared and gave evidence of his propensity for butting. Pigs were always favourites with me on the farm at which I stayed; but I did not quite trust other people's pigs. An aunt had mischieviously told me that pigs often chased human beings along the road and that, even if you climbed a tree to escape, the pig would climb after you. I always believed what I was told and so added to my fears. My love of horses was even greater than my love of pigs; but I had heard of horses savaging their riders, of horses bolting, and a mare that, when grazing with her foal, had bitten a cousin of mine in a moment of maternal solicitude. It seemed that every animal had a touch of the wild animal in it; and I was no hero in the presence of wild animals.

Another of the creatures first shaped in Eden of which I was afraid was the wasp. My elders said to me, "It won't sting you if you keep still," "It can't sting you if you hold your breath," and, if I struck out at it with a handkerchief or a tennis-racquet they said: "You'll only infuriate it." I felt that they might be right about my only infuriating it, but I preferred infuriating it to being stung. In point of fact, I was never stung by a wasp till I was in my thirties though I had been "infuriating" wasps all my life. I conclude from this that wasps, like mice, are more afraid of us than we are of them. The bee family on the whole I did not mind, except on the day on which the honey was taken from the hives, when they became madder than mad bulls and stung even dogs and turkeys. Yet one of my uncles had such command over bees that he never troubled to put on gloves or a face-net when removing their honey. He seemed to have the same power over bees that some people have over horses.

It was not a real but a mythical creature, perhaps, of which I stood in most terror in the country. This was a little animal which was supposed to haunt wells and which was called a man-keeper. If you

knelt at a wayside well for a drink of water, a man-keeper might jump down your throat, and make its way audaciously into your entrails. You could not keep it out by shutting your lips tight; it could force its way through the tightest lips. Even if you got clear of the well without accident, it could pursue you along the road, and, if you jumped over a hedge, it could jump after you, like Spring-heeled Jack, and force its way down your gullet. There was only one way of getting rid of it and so saving your life—by swallowing a tablespoonful of salt. It seems odd to me, as I look back, that though we all believed in the existence of the man-keeper none of us abstained from drinking at wells on that account. Perhaps we trusted that man-keepers would attack only other people; or perhaps the thought that, if the worst came to the worst we had only to go home and take a tablespoonful of salt to be ourselves again gave us confidence.

Of the many other terrors of my childhood one of the acutest was my fear of swallowing fish-bones. I could not eat a herring at breakfast in those days without feeling that I was doing so at the risk of my life. How often have I gone pale as I sat at the table uncertain whether I had swallowed a bone or not! If I had and it stuck in my throat it might choke me. If it went further down, it might bore a hole in some tube in my body and kill me in that way. If any of us did swallow a bone, our nurse undoubtedly encouraged our fears by rushing to get oatcake and butter and making us swallow this as an antidote.

Then there was lightning, at the first flash of which women flung aside needles and scissors and everything that could attract the fated stroke. I did not like lightning any more than I liked hydrophobia. Fear of heights was another thing that made life exciting, and every night there was fear of the dark. This last I believe is fairly common. I know a little girl who, when she had to go upstairs in the dark, used always to run madly past the drawing-room door because she said one night as she passed it she had caught sight of a white wolf sitting on the piano-stool and playing the piano. I myself never saw anything on such occasions. It was the things that I did not see that I suspected were there that frightened me. To be sent to post a letter in the dark was equally terrifying. I sometimes took a table-knife with me for protection, but even with this to defend me I ran all the way.

It will be seen that at an early age I had reached the conclusion that the world was a very unsafe place. It was as though the air were everywhere full of the flying invisible arrows of danger. Yet for me it is a pleasant world to look back to. Even so, I cannot help wishing that I had been born a little more like the cold-blooded man with the bomb in Jermyn Street.

Y. Y.

SIRENS

THE war has thrown up at least one pretty word, "sireen." Mr. Churchill's Jesterpo runs it close and breaks the dread syllables Gestapo into a grin; but Jesterpo remains individual to Mr. Churchill. Nazzies, another favourite with the politicians, I like, too, and the German Minister of Propaganda, whose name has become anything from Gobbles to Jibbles, seems finally marked down for the farmyard. It is a true instinct that draws out stings and smashes the names of your enemies to play with. But sireen is in a class by itself. No minister of mispronunciation wafted it over the air; it came bubbling from the housewife, the milkman and the bus conductor. Probably the existence of names like Ireen, shrilled for generations, will account for its adoption. There at any rate it is, a lovely word, which leaves siren to its old meanings.

* * *

I turn a corner. The surrealists have only just left. Apples strewn everywhere, a codfish among scent bottles, the three skins of the road ripped open to display veins and arteries, here against the blue sky a corner of Pompeii, there a mountain of scree. A wax model leans a little in his window surveying the scene. And the shopkeepers, with white smiles, are already busy sweeping away the glass, which tinkles a morning-after to this wild party.

* * *

A street along which I pass every day is unexpectedly quiet at the further end; the traffic turns aside, and as it turns I catch a glimpse of tragedy, the crater, the poor little ruin that has bled a Union Jack, an armchair set apart on the pavement. The rescue men are at work, crawling and picking. There are sightseers round the ropes. No feeling of shame prevents these people from stripping bare with their gaze walls already stripped of everything except wallpaper and a mirror nailed over a washbasin. The dead and dying below are well out of sight; some compassion, perhaps, as well as cruel relief, goes to excite the crowd. But I don't like their eyes, their patience in standing there. And the gas-mask cases slung over one shoulder only add to the impression—a disturbing one—of a party of tourists.

To-morrow, perhaps, with friends, I shall be standing on the rim of a crater myself, talking and smiling, and someone will think the same about me.

* * *

War-tension has made me notice things this autumn I might otherwise have missed. In a detective story every leaf of the laurels and bend of the drive are made sharp, and so it is with a blitz. On the Embankment the other day I was looking at the plane trees. Many times before I had admired their black boughs and the strange two-balled device of their fruit; on this occasion it was the trunks that held me. Tall, peeled and pied, as though the summer's sunlight filtering through leaves had left a stain. The impression is even stronger if one sees the whole avenue and not the particular tree. Yet I had never focussed this before. My glance strayed to the river; boats, derricks, mud-flats. A gull planed gently down and its reflection rose to meet it; the two coincided with a tiny splash, and at this moment I became aware that there had been a third movement, barely visible: the gull's shadow made by sunlight on the water. Trivial enough, this piece of geometry, but surpassingly pretty. Such minutiæ help, I suppose, to keep the eye alive, and the eye is hungry in wartime.

* * *

But sireens. After all, there's nothing to them except their code; they go, or go off, mournful imitations of the gibbon; they come through after a time with a welcome but undelicious all-clear. The real Sirens of London, these days, are the simple things we haven't got: street lamps and lighted curtains, church bells, bars of chocolate, shop windows to gaze at, theatres to walk into. The queues wait, with all the patience they once gave to their amusements, for a bus and a bomb. Queer evenings. They spread out easily and voluptuously against our fever. A last touch of sunlight on the balloons; the fading green in the west; pale flower-faces hurrying; puddles of light for a little while. Then, dusk to dark, marble to metal. Night! Families huddle by with their bundles, buses quicken to the snap of the guns. It is the Guy Fawkes night, the night within night, we have all learnt to dread. At once, or maybe after a pause, comes the hurl of air, bombs screeching down and at you, the opposite (but who now needs to be told?) of soaring rockets. The householder at home feels his house jump out of its skin, and settle again, and knows everything is all right. This time. No one worries, or needs to worry, about next.

* * *

"Close up, please," says the bus inspector. "Make the queue look a little smaller."

Silence; looks.

"If you'll make the buses look a little larger," I suggest.

* * *

Day closes in, the days close in, and we see winter ahead. There are several ways of getting home to the suburb where I am living. One is to wait for a bus, and to take any bus that offers. Another is to walk. Another is to buy a season-ticket and walk. Many Londoners, I notice, still hug the pretence of tube-travel while they tramp or take round-trips to their next station. Another is to ask a motorist for a lift, but you may find that motorists, yellow label or not, go by too quickly to be asked. A seventh (or have I missed one or two?) is to be a motorist yourself. This I can't afford. A final way is to give up all thought of going home and take to the tube instead. The danger here is not bombs, nor even burial or typhus, but of going native and not coming up again till after the war, when you will emerge with a large family and speaking another language.

* * *

One way I had almost forgotten, though much the quickest and best: by bicycle. Despite halts and turns, it is possible to average 8 m.p.h. as the crow flies. Most passengers will envy this speed; never, in fact, have we been further from being crows. But a bicycle serves very well. With a three-speeder at its most exacting one can slide, swoop, float. If the uphills are more painful than climbing on hands and knees, the down are incomparable, you skim the roofs. The first thing I recovered with a bicycle was the sensation of travel. Every town, I think, has its ideal rate of progression; a mile-an-hour crawl, say, for Oxford or Arles, two hundred and fifty or so through Glasgow. London's ideal speed—for those who like something more than going to and fro—is about ten. You have time to take in all you want and not time enough to acquire a loathing of every house in a row. You are unblinkered, open to the sky. Your eye encloses whole districts, fresh views, something of the geometrical pattern. The fine days are really fine, and your machine clicks and trills like a cicada in a shade; and, by corollary, when it rains, you ply

a treadmill in hell. I am not writing this with any object of persuading the reader to do as I do. But bike calls to bike; in many a brain-pan there is a gyroscope waiting release. Even as you watch me, a wobbler with verve, trying to draw a straight line between tram-rails, the germ may be planted which will change *you* into an acrobat or comedian of the streets. The day of the bicycle will come.

* * *

Even repressions, black-outs and the like, have some advantages. Light a match now in the street after dark and it flares to Land's End. Light your match, having first made sure there's a raid on, and you will be arrested and perhaps put in prison. So, this simplest of actions, in which fifteen months ago we were all free to indulge, has become the privilege of the few. Of the poet, in fact, and the criminal.

Sireens again. This time it's a grimy babe sitting with both feet in the gutter and happily rehearsing the Warning to itself.

G. W. STONIER

LETTER TO A COLLEAGUE IN AMERICA

You begin: "I hope that you won't throw this note away either in disgust or anger when you see this address—" the address is in California. You end up, "This is where you also should be."

I certainly did not throw your letter away. I am glad of the chance to dissociate myself from those writers who have accused their English colleagues in America of running away. I know as well as you must do that there is no possibility of running away from a fate which affects the whole world. Some people, members of the R.A.F., the A.R.P., and the fighting forces, are in immediate danger. If to be a month or more behind them in the race towards doom is running away, then the rest of us are all more or less cowards. It is only a matter of degree. I, living in the country, and with a reserved occupation, am in much the same position as yourself.

No, it is not just the question of running away which concerns me. It is hardly a question of *where* you are at all, but *when*. Europeans who think of America do not think of her so much across the Atlantic, as say "before" or "after" Munich, "before" or "after" the Presidential election. Many of us have hopped about in time and place during the past few years: for every place has its time marked on it, like one of those maps which the German Propaganda Bureaux issue with every country marked with the date of its downfall (*Austria* 1936, *England* 1941, etc.). In Madrid, for example, in 1937, we were anticipating London in 1940. In London in 1938, we were perhaps more or less in New York or Washington 1940.

Between 1933 and 1940, people went backwards and forwards towards and away from *the thing which is happening*, as they might step before a great picture seeing it now near and now from far, occasionally going into an adjoining room to avoid it for moments altogether. However, the masterpiece in which we live didn't remain a picture, it became a conflagration, and now the flames are licking up between the cracks of the pavements in London.

But your letter makes me wonder about you, what some of us—particularly the poets—were wondering about England before the war: whether you really are beginning to think that there are places in the world outside this time, and not merely days and months, a few islands, to which the conflagration has not yet extended. That is really the only question worth asking about Auden, Isherwood, Heard, Aldous Huxley, MacNeice, etc.: not whether they have run away on this particular occasion, but whether they think that there is a chance of escaping from this history altogether?

One passage in your letter particularly makes me ask this: you say, "Here it would be possible for you to write." Perhaps I should not draw too hasty conclusions. In a sense, of course, you are justified in thinking that it is probably impossible now to do creative work in England.

> La politique au milieu des interêts d'imagination, c'est comme un coup de pistolet au milieu d'un concert. Le bruit est déchirant sans être énergique. Il ne s'accorde avec le son d'aucun instrument.

Since the days when Stendhal wrote these words, the pistols have become much louder, the concerts more disconnected. It is certainly difficult to write lyrics in London now; when something so much louder and more destructive and seemingly more important than anything that can go on in one's own head is filling the sky with hammer blows. Yet there is no rule of human nature that makes art impossible under whatever conditions.

Still, perhaps you can write in California, and perhaps I would be able to, though I doubt it. Anyhow, if some English writers have leisure to create, and ink, and publishers to give them advances, that is a great deal. They are an expeditionary force carrying on an extremely important part of the struggle, if the struggle really represents the values to which it pretends. Yet when another friend of ours writes to me that European Civilisation is "done for," and that we must get away and start something somewhere else, I must say I begin to wonder how much of value can be created, even in America, if the conditions in which we are living are so completely misunderstood.

The answer to this friend is obvious. Writers are the interpreters of life around them. Their genius lies in the life, not in themselves, who are only interpreters of life. They are not self-sufficient gramophones, which can be hurried off when things get hot in one place, and set up to start playing their records somewhere else. Machines can be hidden and escape destiny, but consciousness cannot, in the modern world at all events, because it interacts everywhere. That is why no schemes for the emigration of culture have worked for many years now.

Of course, it might happen that if all the artists went away in the middle of a tragedy which was affecting their time, the tragedy would find no voice. This would be a pity, I think. Also, it is impossible, I hope. The people who are most conscious of the significance of events can view them from a certain distance, or they can destroy themselves by refusing to recognise them at all; but they cannot escape into an entirely new and less disturbing series of events, not even in Hollywood.

This brings me to another point. Are you doing yoga exercises? Do you eat flowers? Are you developing a "philosophy of life"? You well may be, from all I hear.

Personally, I feel that yoga exercises, if they involve sitting fairly still for some time every day, and meditating, must be a good thing. There are too few silences in modern life. Everyone ought probably to keep quiet for at least an hour every day, and perhaps everyone should also have some kind of confessional. Yet it is curious, surely, that a realisation of the need for a simple device of this kind becomes for some people the answer to all the problems of the universe. An acquaintance of mine who bought an electric razor at the time of the fall of Boulogne could talk of nothing but new shaving.

In the months and weeks preceding the reputedly overwhelming primeval Flood, there must have been many poets with an intuition of what was coming, many prophets capable of making a radical, virulent analysis of what had gone wrong with the social system, many mystics who consoled themselves with a detachment based on premature despair. Yet the essential problem was to build an Ark, and those who ignored this were first drowned and then reduced to a pulp, together with all their ideas.

The Weimar Republic, the Czech Republic, the French Republic, all had their artists and prophets who achieved true prodigies of sensibility to the Situation, their advanced educationists who humanised the youth of some countries while it was being brutalised in others, their mystics and psycho-analysts who were creating the mythology of a humaner civilisation, their architects who built the swimming baths of the Post-War Germany, and the famous Bau-Haus. They also had their visionaries and advanced sun-bathers, nudists, etc. The achievement of these people was real, and if it had come *after* instead of *before* the Flood, its contribution to a happier world might be immense. Now all these Movements are slightly discredited, because it is so obvious that people who are going to build a new order, cannot afford to ignore the fate that is overtaking the old one. It is no use just shifting the scene of your refusal to realise what you are up against from one area within the range of the bombs to another, a few years "behind the times." If this is what you and all the refugees in America are doing, it seems a pity.

A potential victim of the present chaos is a country incapable of organising itself against it until too late, either on account of a Fifth Column, divided interests in the ruling class, political corruption, or some trap within the Constitution which makes it impossible for the system of government to protect itself adequately. The fact that the moves of the Axis Powers during the present weeks were timed to coincide with the Presidential Election in America shows the part that American impotence plays in a disintegrating world.

So the first thing to realise is that you can't escape. If you try to do so, you are simply putting the clock back for yourself: using your freedom of movement to enable yourself to live still in pre-Munich England. But if you can preserve the sense of the "time in London," then you are in a privileged position. You will know more about this than most Americans do, for example. You will be able to help us by insisting in public and in private on your awareness.

STEPHEN SPENDER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Lucky Partners," at the Gaumont
"Dancing on a Dime," at the Plaza
"Maryland," at the Regal

Gaiety, we have been told by the weather-wise of Fleet Street, is on the way from Hollywood. *Lucky Partners*, and in a far lesser degree *Dancing on a Dime*, come with the first gust and if they are any indication we are in for the good time we rather badly need. Both derive from France. *Lucky Partners* is an offshoot of the exuberant Sacha Guitry, who would obviously conjure like a master with the chief part, of an artist, Casanova, elaborating a chaste honeymoon. Mr. Ronald Colman does not fill the role, as they say, with quite the same delicacy and aplomb. At times, indeed, when the screen included rather too much Colman, I found myself studying with thrilled abhorrence the gardening of that famous moustache. However, he is a seasoned and skilful actor, and his partner in platonics is—a pleasure we shouldn't get from the best Guitry film—Miss Ginger Rogers. I'd go to see any film with Miss Rogers in it, dancing or not, blonde or even coal-black. Here again, as in *Primrose Path*, she enchants without lifting a foot; that awkward character and charm are exploited deliciously; and she mutters and barges round wearing dresses fantastically pretty. The situation in a hotel at Niagara is roughly that of *It Happened One Night*, except that it didn't quite happen. Colman, I must explain, had persuaded her fiancé, "one of the bold on whom assurance sits," to let her go on this honeymoon before settling down—with the hypothetical winnings of a sweepstake ticket. The ticket wins and the "honeymoon" is on; the rest follows with ingenious elaboration including a gay court scene. It hasn't the Guitry spell, it isn't even quite Lubitsch (I'm thinking of *Shop Around the Corner*), but though the director, Lewis Milestone, works a bit too thoroughly for his effects, *Lucky Partners* is still a charming film, and the best preparation for a blitz-night in town.

I wish I could say half as much for *Dancing on a Dime* (a crib, without acknowledgment, from *La Crise est Finie*), but it only amuses in spots. American jazz and foot-taps lack the lyrical and yeasty optimism of the original, but there is some fresh fooling and one or two good bits of improvisation. The scene is restricted to a vacant theatre, and more might have been made of these surroundings. It will do as a third choice with no second on the list.

Maryland is a picture in colour of the horse country. That should be enough to divide, among film-goers, the sheep from the goats. But goats who find themselves straying into the Regal by mistake will be amazed to find in the middle of horse-stuff a half-hour of first-rate darkie comedy. Shadrach (Ben Carter) is delightful, whether gambling away his pay-roll or getting religion. And the colour, which ruins so many pink and white complexions, gives an added lustre to his.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, November 16th—
Fabian Tea Dance, Caxton Hall, Westminster, 2.30. Tickets 2s. 6d., double 4s., from 11 Dartmouth Street, or at door.

SUNDAY, November 17th—
John Katz: "Crisis and Rebirth of Civilisation," Conway Hall, 11.

MONDAY, November 18th—
Fabian Society International Affairs Group Snack Lunch. Sebastian Haffner: "Propaganda to Germany," 12 Great Newport Street, 1. Tickets 1s. 6d.

TUESDAY, November 19th—
H. G. Griffin: "Wartime Activities of the C.P.R.E.," Housing Centre, 13 Suffolk Street, S.W.1, 1.
Philip Guedalla: "The New World and Its History," Royal Institution, 2.30.

WEDNESDAY, November 20th—
Fabian Lunch. Speaker: Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison, Royal Hotel, Woburn Place, 1. Tickets 2s. 9d. from Fabian Society.
M. Gustave Moutet: L'Art en France au XVIIe siècle, Institut Français, 3.

Correspondence

A.R.P IN GLASGOW

SIR,—Ritchie Calder, after a few hours in Glasgow, seems to know more about our shelters and other A.R.P. services than some of us who have been on the job for three years. His references to our city are badly informed and ill-advised. His statement that surface shelters are far from adequate is the essence of absurdity. There is not much excuse for his errors, he was supplied with the official reports which contained evidence contrary to the impressions he has given your readers.

There are back-court shelters (better than anything I saw in London) for almost 200,000 persons in the tenement districts, which are also well supplied with public shelters. In the very district where I understand Mr. Calder resided for one or two nights, there are underground shelters for 13,000 persons. These shelters are superior in equipment to anything of their type in the South. The total of this underground accommodation in working-class districts is over 20,000, supplemented by surface constructions of the latest type. There are more public surface shelters in Glasgow than in any other provincial city; they are well lit, seated and provided with other amenities.

Mr. Calder says he was told that deep shelters in Glasgow "are impossible." There are actually, if we include the places referred to above, more below-ground shelters in Glasgow, in proportion to the population, than in London. There is nothing impossible to any community given time, labour and material. What he was told, probably, was that it would not be practical to provide deep shelters for the whole population within a reasonable period.

My colleagues on the Emergency Committee, John Biggar and Hector McNeill, have been consistent advocates of deep shelters which they brought to the notice of the Government more than a year ago. Permission to construct was refused, and if permission is now granted, it will take longer to construct the shelters because of war handicaps regarding diggers, labour and material. This, however, will not prevent the city going ahead with schemes considered practicable.

Mr. Calder does not seem to have troubled himself to examine Glasgow's basement shelters, which are immeasurably superior to those I saw in London. Most basements in the central area have been equipped with seats, lighting and other conveniences, and have been ready for occupation for several months. The Chief Engineer estimates that 80,000 persons can be provided for in these basements, most of which are suitable for bunk installation. One experiment is being tried out.

Mr. Calder, in four sentences, suggests, after consulting his geological friends, it would be easy to employ mining engineers and miners to construct deep shelters. This is the fantasy of an intellectual. Miners are not good navvies. Mining engineers are not necessarily the best men to engage for the designing and construction of underground accommodation. Mining engineers (unlike Mr. Calder, I speak with knowledge of mining) have never been keen enthusiasts for ventilation and sanitation, otherwise they would have made better arrangements for the men who dig coal.

The engineering department of the Corporation has all the information it requires about the geology of the city, and has plans ready for the underground shelters that may be necessary. Many underground works have been carried out in the city, without any need to call in the so-called intellectuals.

Mr. Calder does not know what he is talking about when he sneers at the baffle walls as a protection for tenement closes and stairs. The close and staircase are the strongest built sections of a tenement and more likely to survive bombing attacks than other parts. That is why, after many tests, they are protected by baffles and strutting. Glasgow tenements, moreover, are built more strongly than the houses in the East End of London which collapsed from concussion. I have seen several tenements surviving after bombing operations. Scottish houses will stand up to attack with a fairer chance of survival than the shack houses in the East End of London. Scottish houses have more resisting power. The walls of most of the tenements are built of stone, and the floors are at least twice as strong as those of house floors in the London boroughs.

Mr. Calder says that even if he accepted the safety factor he would no more shelter in a tenement close on a winter's night than in a refrigerator. The people of Glasgow are not so afraid, and complain when closes are not baffled or strutted. It is unlikely, moreover, that raids on Glasgow will be as fierce or prolonged as they have been on London, and other parts of the South of England. There are physical and scientific reasons for this that should be known to Mr. Calder or any other NEW STATESMAN contributor. Scotland has not escaped raiding, but it has not been on the same extensive scale as has been experienced in South England.

I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Calder when he was in Glasgow and, after hearing his accounts of London, decided to go to the Metropolis and see for myself how its people behaved during air raids. London was no more terrorised than Glasgow would be in similar circumstances. Its social, public and industrial services were being well maintained, and its people kept moving although I was told afterwards there were 400 German machines engaged in the daylight raiding.

I met officials of the London County Councils, and Boroughs, and visited a number of districts in the East End. There was no evidence of panic or disorganisation. London may have been as bad as some journalists alleged it was, in the first days of raiding, but it seems to have recovered its poise, defiance and cheerfulness. What amazed me was the disdain of the Londoners for underground shelters during the daylight raids. The Londoners kept at their tasks as if raiding was of no importance. Their behaviour in all-night raids is beyond all praise.

It is not for me to criticise London's complicated and overlapping civic organisation, but I am convinced, after seeing it in operation, that Glasgow's preparations will stand a strain as severe as that which happened in London. County Council and Borough officials in London were unanimous in stating too many exaggerated reports had been published regarding air-raid damage in the Capital. They are right. The reports about provincial cities are probably just as reliable as some about London.

City Chambers, Glasgow, C.2. P. J. DOLLAN, Lord Provost.

[Mr. Calder replies: "Since I was deliberately trailing my coat, I flatter myself on having successfully "drawn" my friend and fellow-worker Lord Provost Dollan. His letter is exactly the foot-note I wanted for the article. And I expected it, having followed the controversy on the same subject in which he engaged with the Glasgow press and with people who have spent more than the 'few hours' in Glasgow, which he finds so inadequate in my case.

"He has known me long enough to know that I would not wantonly make mischief for his administration, that I am usually thorough, reasonably well-informed and not often ill-advised. He knows too that I never accept, uncritically, official reports even when they are his own. Since the details are, I imagine, confidential, I can only say that, maybe wrongly, I do not share his satisfaction with them.

"My 'few hours' in Glasgow had at least the background of experience 'under fire' in London, five weeks of Blitzkrieg tests and more than three years of absorption in A.R.P. as a member of the Labour Party A.R.P. Committee and other bodies.

"Most of Glasgow's 1,088,000 population is closely congregated in tenements and any figures about shelter-provision must be related to that fact. The basement policy is being developed, with, I hope, due regard to the experience gained by the Home Office experts during the past two months in London. The Lord Provost's "one experiment" in bunking the city basements carries its own comment.

"As for the construction of deep shelters, if I was misled about the city's intentions it was by Lord Provost Dollan himself, and as for his jibe about the use of mining engineers and miners being the 'fantasy of an intellectual,' as one Scots

elementary schoolboy to another, Is that fair? Anyway, so far from being a 'fantasy,' Newcastle has engaged the best mining engineer it can find and is employing immediately 300 miners, with plans for using hundreds more, on the provision of tunnel shelters.

"I am quite impenitent about those tenement entrances protected by baffle walls. Of course the closes, strutted or otherwise, are the strongest part of the tenements, but, more often than not, they have stair windows which will blow into the close. And, much as I admire the hardiness of the tenement-dwellers of Glasgow, I cannot imagine them enduring winter night-raids in those open closes.

"What causes me most concern is the Lord Provost's complacent estimates of the risks. Neither he nor I nor 'any other NEW STATESMAN contributor' can have sufficient evidence, scientific or otherwise, from which to assess the future effects of raids on Clydeside. Of course, the raiders have farther to go and are unlikely to have fighter escorts. I have heard other arguments in Glasgow and other parts of the North as to why raids could not be nearly so bad as in London—and I hope they are right! But if there is one thing we should have learned, from the bitterest of experience, it is the sin of under-estimating possibilities—and the enemy. That, and not criticism of Glasgow, was the main object of my article. The North cannot afford to harbour illusions.

"Moreover, the Lord Provost, who blames me for impressions gathered 'in a few hours' in Glasgow, seems to have hustled up a few himself in a brief visit to London. I gather they confirmed, so far as the behaviour of the people is concerned, the account which I gave him and which brought him to London. I hope that when he saw that sublime indifference of the Londoner to the daylight raids, he saw also people holding, through the raids, their places in the queues for night-shelter. They were less concerned about immediate safety (e.g., Glasgow's baffled closes) than in making sure of places for the working members of their families, so that they can sleep with some sense of security and warmth.

"His last paragraph baffles me, although it is not my 'pigeon.' How can exaggerated reports of air-raid damage have been published? Details of the extent of the damage for good reasons have not been released. Information about damage is under censorship, and if journalists, like myself and Lord Provost Dollan, have authentic facts, we cannot print them. Publications cannot exaggerate because the censor will not let them, even if they wanted to do so.

"Since I had no reason for making either political or journalistic capital out of the situation in Glasgow, will Lord Provost Dollan believe that my criticisms (not as uninformed as he suggests) were well-meant?

"I should, I suppose, be grateful that he has not called me a 'fifth columnist'!"—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

RUMOURS

SIR,—There are rumours, based on what foundation I know not, that Herr Hitler will, in the course of the winter, put forward a plan of general appeasement. Should he do so, it is to be hoped that the people of this country will be allowed to know the facts and possibilities of the situation. Certain independent experts have always held, and it begins to look as though they were right, that Britain would not be invaded because an invasion could certainly be repelled. These same experts think that British Forces, even with such aid as they may hope to obtain from America, will be unable to conquer the continent of Europe. Also they think poorly of our chances of starving Germany out; because, they argue, though it is probable that before long the people of Europe will be extremely hungry, it seems unlikely that German soldiers and munition-makers, with unlimited powers of requisitioning, will go short. The notion that the unarmed and ill-fed populations could rise successfully is generally dismissed as silly.

If these assumptions be correct, what remains? A bombing match between Great Britain and Germany. Some believe that by incessant bombing Germany could destroy our efficiency; but they agree that before she had achieved that end her own efficiency would have been reduced by three-quarters at least. How would she stand then? Whatever happens, the British war finished, Germany must find herself between two great powers, America and Russia, neither of which has any reason to love or trust her. Therefore, say some, she would promptly make a dash for the Ukraine and the Black Sea. No, say others, she would raid South America and try, with Japanese help, to get control of the Panama Canal. There are those even who maintain that, content with her achievements, she would settle down to the task of reorganising Europe under German hegemony. Clearly her chance of realising either the first or second aim must be greatly reduced if her resources have been depleted to the tune of seventy-five per cent.; while the task of reconstructing Europe will be harder than ever when the most productive parts of it have been laid waste. These are the facts and opinions of which the British people should be told. The possibilities are matters of inference from these facts and opinions. If it be true that Germany can neither be conquered in the field nor starved out, it is improbable that she will desist from waging war till the British Navy is destroyed or neutralised. We have reason to believe that she cannot destroy the Navy. In that case she cannot get all she wants. Neither, unless we can command, and command before long, overwhelming forces by land and air, can Great Britain get all she wants, i.e., the liberation of Europe and the security of the whole empire. Germany may appear to hold the court cards; nevertheless there are some fair-sized trumps in our hand. The question is—Have we anyone who can play them?

CLIVE BELL

THE YOUTH

SIR,—Mr. Editor, I'm worried about the Youth. A lot of other people here are, too: in fact, that's what made me worried. You see, all sorts of people here feel very strongly that they want to do something about the Youth. And when I hear them talk I want to do something about the Youth, too.

Of course, someone asked what we ought to do, and, of course, the first thing to do was to hold lectures and have conferences. So someone who is worried about the Youth lectures to other people who are worried about the Youth, and this helps us to understand the Youth. And there's the Adolescent, too. And the fact that there's a war on makes it all the more so.

And then there was a big conference—"Service of Youth" it was called—with M.P.s and the wife of a Cabinet Minister. Mrs. Walter Elliot she was, and she really is go-ahead. Because she said the first thing that struck her was that there weren't any young people on the committee (I'm afraid our young people aren't very interested in the Youth) and there certainly ought to be. Well, of course, that went big with the audience, because now we were sweeping away conventions and getting down to things. So we're going to go out and get us a couple of young people and have them on the platform next time, and then by jingo!

Only they don't go far enough, Mr. Editor. If we're sweeping away conventions, why not sweep away the Youth? It isn't even a British convention, it's imported. In the old days people of all ages managed to get along without paying attention to the Youth. Didn't they?

19 Finsbury Terrace, R. RHEES
Swansea.

P.S.—Someone has just told me that we've got to get young people interested in the Youth because otherwise they won't be interested in all the things we have to tell them. He also said something about Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Do you think so, Mr. Editor?

VENEREAL DISEASE

SIR,—A graph of the venereal diseases during 1914–1919 was the most vivid discovery of my medical student days. I cannot put my hands on exact statistics, but older officers tell me that we had two army corps immobilised then in France, and roughly one-sixth of our men in the Near East were infected. Medical treatment was inadequate, and they were simply packed off home in boat-loads. We started this war outnumbered, and with the defection of France and then the entry of Italy the disparity in numbers has grown at an alarming pace until our relative strengths in man-power are no longer mentioned. And yet we are making no plans to avert this unnecessary drain on personnel, which will grow with increasing speed, perhaps to plague proportions. True, the discovery of M. & B. 693 has shortened the cure in one disease. That is all.

I am a doctor in one of our fighting Forces. For two months I have been trying to find out whether any concerted effort is to be made, and I can find nothing. There is a feeling of hopelessness. Some 80 per cent. of our doctors agree with me in the method of choice, though convinced that England would rather lose the war than sanction brothels for the Forces: the inevitable moralists take the attitude inevitable in moralists.

In 1929 a brothel was organised for our Forces in Baghdad, but petticoat rule threatened questions in the House of Commons and the project was squashed. Lady Roberts did the same for our Indian Army. However, in Cairo before this war early treatment centres were opened in already existing houses, where sheaths were offered, and, if refused, early treatment was given our troops with 33 per cent. Calomel cream and 2.5 per cent. Protargol. Results suggest that such prophylaxis confers very nearly complete immunity when instituted within eight hours. I tried it out recently with numbers of men in France, with no failures.

The argument for recognised houses is that treatment can be carried out even if the man is drunk, and sources of infection can be traced. At present the camps with the highest incidence of disease are those situated far in the country, whose men come in by bus, once a week or once a fortnight. I know of two women spreading infection, but our Assistant Provost Marshal can do nothing except close the "pub" they frequent, and cause a change of scene.

We are now embarking on a Near Eastern campaign again. Our men may not come home for years. Must we wait until venereal disease assumes plague proportions before considering methods of prevention? No one can deny that our nation has a genius for blinding itself to social and political dangers, but I do not believe that we are a nation of fools, once the scales have been removed from our eyes.

M.B., B.Ch.

LABOUR AND INDIA

SIR,—When Mr. Attlee was the guest of honour last February at the Annual Dinner of the Oxford Majlis (the Society of Indian Students at Oxford) he assured us that his party at least would do everything in its power to find a just and honourable solution of the Indian deadlock. Now a Government in which Labour holds the key-position appears to have deliberately embarked upon a policy of uncontrolled repression in India. It seems strange! Or does it reveal the true character of the British Labour Party?

D. M. ANAND
Jesus College,
Oxford.

PURCHASE TAX

SIR,—Your correspondent "Retailer," suggests that he fears punitive action by Price Regulation Committees on complaints by the public of overcharges. He need not. If a retailer is accused of making a profit out of the tax he can retort that his increase of profit is necessary to cover his overhead expenses on a reduced turnover; or, more simply, that he has decided to increase his percentage of profit. There is no law governing the amount of profit which a shop may make, apart from food and other rationed articles. Profit varies with the locality, with the class of goods and with competition. Millinery, for example, is often priced at three times its cost. A trader can raise his price to as much as he can get.

Compulsory insurance of stock, A.R.P. expenses, purchase tax and the proposed insurance of buildings will all be added to the cost of goods, and as much profit as the trade will stand calculated thereafter, and no Government Committee nor Department can stop it under present legislation.

28 Great Castle Street, LIONEL MUNDY
W.1.

A MOSLEM VIEW

SIR,—I missed your issue of November 2nd, and have just seen Mr. Leonard Woolf's letter in which he makes the rather interesting suggestion that Mr. Gandhi should be made Viceroy of India.

What your British readers think of this suggestion is for them to say, but I as a Muslim consider it not only "fantastic" but also fatal. The effect of such an appointment on the 90 million Muslims living in the bi-national sub-continent of India

would be "revolutionary"—though not in the sense in which he uses that word in his letter. It would be the shortest cut to catastrophe; for it could not but lead to a civil war between the Muslims and the Hindoos, the repercussions of which would be felt far beyond the frontiers of the sub-continent.

Why? Because we, the Muslims, still remember that we were the rulers of "India" till 1857; that during the past eighty years for the co-operation that we have given to the British, both in peace and in war, all that we, as a nation, have received in return is our progressive "Indianisation," our systematic reduction to the position of an Indian minority community even in Pakistan and Bengal, where we constitute a majority of the population, and, finally, the grim prospect of our permanent subordination to the Hindoos under an all-India constitution—be it federal or unitary.

We remember all this and are, therefore, determined to resist any further imposition of "Indianism" on our people. Needless to add that Mr. Gandhi's appointment would not only do that but make it supreme over the Muslims.

This is not to oppose the suggestion as such, which I have neither the wish nor the right to do. It is simply to say that while, for the sake of "freedom and liberty," you are quite welcome to make Mr. Gandhi Viceroy of India proper (Hindoostan), you have, in the name of "democracy," no right to expect the Muslim nation in Pakistan and in Bengal to submit to the Hindoo domination of which the suggested appointment would certainly be an unmistakable portent.

9 Highfield Avenue, R. A. CHOUDHARY
Cambridge.

SAVING CIVILISATION

SIR,—A correspondent, in one of our great dailies, has recently reminded us of the grievous consequences that might take place if Athens—"the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence"—should be subjected to intensive air-attack. The Parthenon might, only too easily, be reduced to a heap of shapeless ruins. But the proposal to make reprisals by bombing Rome is not to be contemplated without anxiety. Rome has within it priceless monuments of antiquity which are the heritage of the Western world at large, even though these monuments are nominally Italian. Are these to be in peril of destruction? Sentiment, in such a matter, is surely not misplaced: it counts for much. Moreover, Rome is the seat of the Papacy, and, therefore, the spiritual home of half Christendom. The thought of bombs falling—even though not dropped intentionally—upon the Vatican, with all its incomparable art treasures, is something from which I shrink. E. H. BLAKENEY

Orchard Lawn,
Winchester.

WILLIAM BOYCE

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to a paragraph in your issue of October 26th, where your critic states that the music by William Boyce selected by me for the ballet "The Prospect Before Us" is "greatly inferior to the composer's amiable symphonies."

May I point out that with the exception of the minuet on the sixth side all the music in the recorded suite from "The Prospect Before Us" comes from the symphonies in question? CONSTANT LAMBERT.

THE COST OF JUSTICE

SIR,—"Critic" on October 26th has a note on the cost of justice. Instances could be multiplied. At a recent assize in Oxford two cases were down for trial. In the first the accused was not present and was believed to be fighting in France, yet witnesses, lawyers, etc., had all been summoned. In the other case the accused had from the outset pleaded guilty. He was a psychopath, who in any civilised country would have been treated medically instead of penally. Four times as many women as could possibly have been empanelled had been summoned, though women jurors could not try such a case as this. And again witnesses, lawyers, etc. were in attendance. All this makes justice a public nuisance rather than a privilege. At the next session there was no case set down for trial at all, but the whole caravan arrived just the same, and the judge received his £5,000 a year for coming to Oxford to attend divine service, along with the lesser luminaries at their proportionate salaries.

All this is not maintaining the dignity of the law but displaying an incompetence in management which would bring any other business to a swift and well-deserved bankruptcy.

Oxford. A. MORGAN YOUNG

THE *PHAEDO* AND THE *APOLOGY*

SIR,—In his interesting article "The Fear of Death," Professor Joad cites an argument as "used by Socrates in the *Phaedo*." It is indeed true that the *Phaedo* is apposite to-day. Readers who turn to it will find the "great pleasure and profit" of which Professor Joad speaks; but they will not find the argument which he quotes as from its pages. It is in the *Apology* that Socrates expresses that "non-committal" attitude towards death, and yet faces it with courage. This, too, is good reading for to-day. In the *Phaedo*, he is represented by Plato as discussing a series of arguments in support of the belief in survival after death; and his closing words to his friends are instinct with that faith. "Deal with my body as you will; *me* you cannot burn or bury, for I shall be gone away." And so on to the end.

Professor Joad might well have included the actual argument of the *Phaedo* in his survey. As it is, this reference to Plato must be misleading to readers unfamiliar with his writings.

Cambridge. DOROTHY TARRANT

EDIBLE FUNGI

SIR,—Mr. Alexander Block's interesting and provocative article on "Edible and Poisonous Fungi" evoked memories of my experience during the last war with regard to the nutritive value of mushrooms.

After the fall of Riga, the Russian Red Cross ambulance train to which I was attached happened to be marooned on a siding at the edge of a forest and very far from any town or village. Provisions were low, and our head doctor—a woman—who had previously taught me how to distinguish many of the different varieties of edible fungi found in Russia, suggested that the neighbouring forest might supply our needs. So, for two or three weeks we gathered mushrooms—chiefly Massliniki, Biriosofki, and Bielinki—and cooked them with what little butter remained, and afterwards with any milk we might wheedle from some chance peasant who still had a cow.

This diet proved quite satisfying.

35 Guessens Court, MARGARET A. CHAMBERS
Welwyn Garden City,

"SUFFICIENT IS THINE ARM ALONE"

SIR,—"Critic" implies that there is an inconsistency in saying "Sufficient is Thine arm alone" and relying on the Navy. Of course the Navy, the R.A.F. and all our other defences, are the operations of God's arm. If only God wants us to be defended, it is certain that it will be done, either by the natural means already in operation, or by a miracle, or by some other natural means, or in some way that no one has thought of. M. SNOW

8 Hernes Road, Oxford.

SIR,—Men who are giving their all in the defence of civil or national liberty (though its form may pass away as that of Athens did) are justified in sharing the language of the saints who gave their all in witnessing to an eternal reality.

These words sound quite natural to those who have spent all their lives in the worship and supra-national or international atmosphere of the Church, which has survived rather by the lives of martyrs, contemplatives and unarmed communities than by government protection. Perhaps those who sing them in a national emergency may be led to sense an eternal emergency and the presence of another army. His who

> . . . wandering unarm'd save by the Spirit's flame,
> In few years with few friends founded a world-empire

wider than Alexander's and more enduring;
since from His death it took its everlasting life.
His kingdom is God's kingdom, and His holy temple
not in Athens or Rome but in the heart of man.
(Bridges)

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

If there is not a novel in every man and woman we meet, there is generally a cautionary tale. "That ridiculous and excellent person, Mrs. Opie," said Miss Mitford. "What a miserable hash she has made of her existence." She had caught the once-beautiful Mrs. Opie at a bad age, 46, and at a bad moment in her life, from which she was to make a typical and spirited recovery. It is always consoling to remind ourselves that somewhere in the world some Miss Mitford is holding us up as an awful warning. Hash? Miserable hash? So it might seem to Miss Mitford when, after a life of triumphant gaiety in London and Paris, the tantalising widow of Opie, the painter, put on the Quaker gown and bonnet and set to writing heavy didactic tales instead of gaudy, guilty and improper ones, and started thee-ing and thou-ing her acquaintances with all the gush of a convert. And so it had seemed to the Quakers before her conversion, and especially to Elizabeth Fry and the rest of the Gurney family at Earlham. Even after the conversion, their doubts continued. Wasn't she still a friend of Lady Cork's? Hadn't she still got an unfortunate novel in manuscript? Could one credit the champion of Mary Wollstoncraft and Godwin with a change of heart? What prospect was there of "the inner light" shining for long in a mind bedizened with the memories of fashionable society, of "pink" parties for the gay and "blue" parties for the highbrow? Wasn't Amelia Opie inevitably "shallow"? She might even be teasing them with her conversion, for she did seem to have what George Fox would have called (in the century before the Quaker mellowing) a "light and chaffy" nature. But neither Quakers nor Miss Mitford could take the severe view of Mrs. Opie's vivacious character for long. They loved her too well to think of her as the awful warning against worldliness. For the truth is that Amelia Opie had not so much the awfulness of a warning as the piquancy of a recurrent type. Born in 1769 and dying in 1853, she lived through a revolution and a European war, as we are doing, and then repented—as we may also, for all we know. She is a kind of heroine of our time.

What is the type? Turn to *Amelia, The Tale of a Plain Friend*, by Miss Jacobine Menzies-Wilson and Helen Lloyd, which has been now re-issued by the Oxford University Press in a 5*s.* edition, an indulgent, discursive biography which has drawn largely on Amelia Opie's immense correspondence. The adored and adoring daughter of a Norwich doctor, whose mother, after years of invalidism, died while the girl was still in her teens, Amelia illustrates the common decision of Nature that girls who have an inordinate devotion to their fathers shall deal coolly with other men and will prefer those much younger or much older than themselves. She was, above all, a flirt, one bent on continual conquest—a flirt with literature, politics and religion, which she called in to aid her when she set about the more important business of flirting with men. Her susceptible nature—and one cannot think of her as profoundly passionate—made her into one of those women who when they come into a room are possessed by the certainty that they will succeed, and the lightness of their feeling makes them do so. Later she was to become a vivacious snob, a determined celebrity hunter, but she twirled into the limelight with the infallible grace of a ballet dancer.

Being irresistible, the splenetic might say, was not only an instinct but a business with Amelia Opie. She wrote frightful novels which made Sir Walter Scott weep, and awful verses which Sydney Smith quoted in his lectures—the bad taste of great men has a long history—but she had taken care, it might be observed, to get to know the great first. She asked Southey once to say a word to the reviewers. She was one of those women who, having addled a man's judgment with the blackmailing glances of their eyes, demand to be admired for their minds. She was quite candid about her technique in her last novel. She was irresistible, she implies, because she was unable to resist—at first; later she resisted when, after flattering them, she made others think *they* had become irresistible. No grand passions for her, she said, no durable affections:

> My object is to amuse life away and *a little love*, just enough to give interest to scenes and places is delightful. . . . My attachments are like gentle squeezes of the hand. . . .

A great passion would destroy her "peace of mind." No wonder the Norwich Quakers, plump, benevolent but austerely Liberal in matters of virtue, were always a little dubious when the chatty best-seller, who knew all the celebrities of London and Paris, put on the Quaker bonnet. Was the accomplished actress really putting on another act? Of course she was. And yet, of course she was not. Amelia had some of that stupidity in her nature which some call ingenuousness and which is the price a woman has to pay for being vain of her unconventionality. But she is a delightful argument for the charm of an ill-adjusted life, for the merits of being a bit of a fraud and for the disturbing effects of a dash of puritanism in the female character.

After her mother's death, life at the doctor's house lost the constraints of invalidism. Amelia, who had been hushed away into childish solitariness in which she had quickly picked up a love of the sensational, the guilty and the morbid, found herself in an atmosphere ideal for the escapades of the mind. Many of the English provincial towns in the eighteenth century had the intellectual liveliness of little capitals. In Norwich Crome was painting; Holcroft and Godwin and the Radical leaders dined with the doctor. The ideas of the French Revolution were in the air and, as she listened to her father's admiration of Lafayette, the young hostess became a Republican, went back to her room to write plays and poetry, and found that the great liked to be asked for their criticisms. At least, with young ingenuity, she thought that this was what interested them. Her mind (she was to tell Godwin and Holcroft, as they gazed with desire upon her person) was her great preoccupation. Nothing, of course, hooks an intellectual more securely than that sort of declaration—and nothing keeps him more effectively and hopelessly threshing a safe distance away, at the end of the line. With Godwin hooked, jealous of her friends, begging her to rule her emotions by the light of Reason while he himself fell into an irrational state because she would not kiss him, Amelia established her technique. Now she could deal with anyone, indeed preferably with several at a time, and sat down to write an anonymous book called *The Dangers of Coquetry*.

In the meantime, she had made another conquest, one which lasted her lifetime and which did not spring from her engaging vanity but was directed by a warmer need of her nature. As a child Amelia had not known the geniality of normal family life. She needed a family and she conquered one. The Gurneys of Earlham were Quakers, a large family of children younger than herself and glad to admire and love the literary belle with her poems and her songs. Quakerism had mellowed: music, painting and dancing were permitted to the younger Gurneys, who turned to Amelia with the love of the still prim-ish for the worldling. Revolt was in the minds of the younger generation. There were Corresponding Societies—the English equivalent of the Jacobin Clubs—in Norwich; respectable "pinks" were being spied on and even tried for sedition, treason and revolutionary activity; the religious faith of the younger Gurneys was lapsing, and Amelia, who was "in the movement," who had run into scandal because of her passion for Mary Wollstoncraft and her defence of Godwin's marriage, and who was known to be in love with a married man, brought confidence to the agony of the young atheists. They were to get their own back later when time brought their repentance and exchanged their new puritanisms for old. Amelia, the converter, was to be re-converted by them. Elizabeth Fry was one of those children, and Amelia, at her gayest and most "worldly," in the midst of writing her "immoral" novels about seduced heroines, mad fathers and women ruined by "a false step taken in innocence," always responded uneasily to criticism from Earlham.

But the quaint fruit of Amelia's deep affection for the Gurneys was to ripen slowly. By the time she was 28 and still unmarried, Norwich had begun to shake its head. It was all very well to be clever, beautiful, mysterious, the skilful heartbreaker (Norwich said), but the coquette who turns down one proposal too many ends on the shelf. And Amelia was in her first mess. "Mr. B," the married man, was only too well married, and there was no way of getting him. It was a crisis of the heart, no doubt, but it was also a crisis for her vanity, with all Norwich watching, the Gurneys above all. The solution was—and how true to her type she was—to drown a scandal in a sensation. She did so. She married Opie. He was a peasant with a strong Cornish accent, shocking table manners, a divorced wife, she did not love him. But he was in the limelight. His table manners made her hesitate—odd things made her hesitate: after Opie's death she went all out for a Lord with the idea of reforming him, but turned him down in the end because "they both had enough to live on"—but in the end she plunged. She married Opie. She pushed him into society, saw to it that he got commissions. Now it was that she wrote the best-seller when her husband's work went temporarily out of fashion. And when he died—for the marriage was to be an interlude in her life—she fought to get him buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, and grieved so extravagantly, in so many poems, panegyrics and memoirs, and so loudly, that her friends had to remind her that she was enjoying herself more than the onlookers.

The Gurneys were worried. They enjoyed being stirred up by the celebrity, though by this time Amelia's claims to mind were mocked by reviewers. The Gurneys were older. They had returned to respectable opinions and even to their old religion. A reconquest of the Gurneys was necessary, a new teasing of their godliness. To this period belongs her characteristic affair with Joseph John Gurney, a strict young Quaker, and with Haydon, the elderly reprobate of Bognor, who had had a well-advertised *ménage à trois* with his wife and his servant. To Joseph John she talked and wrote about "the world," a subject which shocked and fascinated him; with Haydon, she talked about religion, which shocked and fascinated *him*. Haydon was old, Joseph John was young. He listened, he reproved, he lectured. She loved it. She loved especially that he did not despair of recapturing her for the Lord. It would have dismayed her to know that in the end he would succeed, but the prudent Quaker was careful to *marry* someone else.

The second mess, "the miserable hash" in fact, was the direct cause of her conversion. Sooner or later that amusing vanity, that so easy and confident susceptibility, was certain to be snubbed. One does not suppose she

MY FIRST WAR

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loved Tom Alderson, her knowing young cousin, very deeply, but she was humiliated when he turned her down. The answer again was a new sensation: the Quaker bonnet. We need not agitate ourselves as the Quakers did about the sincerity of that conversion. At 60, when she broke out again and went to Paris on a celebrity hunt after Lafayette, to renew her revolutionary enthusiasms, to catch events as they rose, D'Angers the sculptor called her a Janus, a two-faced siren who instinctively showed you the side you did not ask for. Her misleading Puritanism, perfectly chaste but with delusive promise of wantonness, delighted the Frenchman. But Miss Mitford cattily noted that Amelia ordered the silk for her Quaker gown from Paris; and Paris was astonished and enchanted by a celebrity who arrived in Quaker costume. After all, in her youth she had stood in court watching the trial of Holcroft for treason and had cried "Liberty" in the streets; but she had insisted on meeting the aristocratic émigrés, too. And how deceptive she is even in her portraits. That plump, soft, wistful wench with the murmuring eyes and sensual mouth, in Opie's painting, does not look like the dazzler of the great. That humorous, blunt-faced, double-chinned sexagenarian of D'Anger's medallion does not look like the spiritualised creature his ecstatic letters describe. What was it that got them all? Was it, as the last of her unredeemed novels suggested, the art of listening, the most flattering of all flatteries? For one cannot, one must not believe that the title of the first book, a didactic work, written after her redemption, offers the clue. It was called: *Lying, In all its Branches.*

V. S. PRITCHETT

WIT REVIVED

English Wits. Edited by LEONARD RUSSELL. *Hutchinson.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

"Is it hazardous to say that *English Wits* is the best thing of its kind since Thackeray published his lectures on the English comic writers?" begins the blurb of this book. It is more than hazardous, it is paranoia. It is sad to live in an age in which the virtues of good criticism—scholarship, enthusiasm, insight, impartiality, are in decay, but it is harrowing to see the complacency with which journalists assume them. *English Wits* is an agreeable, finely printed blitzkrieg diversion, and to have brought it out at all shows courage, but to claim kinship to one of the masterpieces of the nineteenth century for this piece of scrappy popularisation with its whiff of Fleet Street livery stable, is a disaster. The wits include Pope, Johnson, Wilde, Whistler, Sydney Smith, Theodore Hook, Lamb, Sheridan, Wilkes, Labouchère, Beerbohm, Shaw, Saki, and Miss Mitford. One can more or less write off Wilkes, Labouchère, Hook, Mitford, as not being witty by our standards, for unlike everything else, the sense of humour has continued to evolve in the last fifty years. Beerbohm and Shaw are still alive. Wilde was born in the same year as Shaw, and he alone, of the dead, towers above the living. What is needed is a serious book about wit which analyses its ingredients, traces its history, and explains why wit is now out of fashion, why it is impossible to read more than a page at a time of wit, even the best, why there is often something so unpleasant about the characters of witty people. None of the contributors has been aware of these problems, except Desmond MacCarthy and A. J. A. Symons, who drop a few hints about them.

It is impossible to distinguish between wit and humour, but one can say that in wit the intellect predominates, in humour the imagination. The intellect is more critical than the imagination, therefore wit is more cruel; moreover, people are prouder of their intellect than of their imagination, and consequently in wit there is often an element of snobbery and exhibitionism. In practical joking we can recognise in addition the bitterness of the inferiority complex, and the cruelty to others of those who are conscious of not making the most of their powers. Verbal wit as well requires certain standards of leisure and education from its audience, and as the universal guilt at having profited from the inequalities of life is spreading, academic wit is beginning to be worn as uneasily as a bowler hat. Humour on the other hand is flourishing, because it is essentially unprivileged. Thurber, who would have been quite incomprehensible to Pope, Johnson, or even to Whistler, is far more of an artist than any living wit. The humorous Harpo triumphs over the witty Groucho, humorous Isherwood replaces witty Waugh. We get tired of wit quicker than humour, because it is harder to follow and because there is something complete and perfectionist about wit which cloys. For that reason I think the best wit should be, like an Oriental carpet, asymmetrical. Before Thurber wrested the laurel from Firbank, England produced the best wit, because there was in it a vein of nonsense which gave it just that creative, warm, imperfect aspect which never clogs the appetite. The wit we prefer should be just a little ridiculous, not too verbal and intellectual, and perhaps women are better at it than men. *The English Wits* includes only one woman, Miss Mitford, who enables Mr. Agate to reel off one of his *bagatelles*. The master of it was Wilde, who could make use of several strengths and combinations of wit and humour, which he blended early by the imitation of Congreve and Brummell. Brummell was essentially "droll," his invitation to a friend to come to Brighton "all chintz and seawater" or his explanation of his cold, that he caught it through "sharing a bed with a damp stranger" have just that feminine flash of warmth and absurdity that is valuable.

Examples. (1) Wit. Housman's famous after-dinner speech. "It is said that in this university Wordsworth was never drunk and Porson was never sober. A greater poet than Porson and a better scholar than Wordsworth, I stand before you, gentlemen, betwixt and between"—or the Italian diplomat who said to the neighbour who woke him when he snored at a peace conference: "Quoi? vous souffrez de l'insomnie?"

(2) Wit plus something. The woman who said she had last seen her drunken cook running along "with all Vine Street in her hair" and Mrs. Patrick Campbell's definition of marriage: "It's the deep, deep peace of the double bed after the Hurly Burly of the Chaise-longue," or Wilde's "I have always preferred pleasure to happiness, one must make for the tragic side when one sees it."

Wit has made little progress since Wilde. Saki, though genuinely neurotic when writing about children and animals, is an adolescent imitation of Wilde adapted to the *Morning Post* reader; Wodehouse and Coward have developed from Wilde's ludicrous side. England works her humorists to death. Beachcomber, Wodehouse, Nathaniel Gubbins are permitted no close season, they are exploited till they drop in harness. They are artists, but their wit is squeezed out of them till its virtue is dissipated: we force them to cheat like our mediums.

Of the essays in this book MacCarthy's is excellent on Wilde. He alone really knows what he is talking about. Symons is polished and interesting on Theodore Hook, but handicapped by the mediocrity of his subject. These two are the best. It is difficult to isolate Pope, who was a great poet, as a wit, or to say much more about Dr. Johnson, while the articles on Saki, Whistler, even Beerbohm and Shaw, do nothing to raise their stature, nor will anything make me believe that Wilkes and Labouchère were especially funny. Robert Lynd makes a very good case out for Lamb, and the infection of so much vicarious wit enables the editor to achieve a brightness which is hair-raising. A second volume is promised; it should be much more carefully planned, and the authors, properly chosen, should collaborate on the historical development of English wit and its psychological aspects. That would be a book worth reading. I was about to protest against the omission of all reference to the wit of the dandies, to Rochester, Congreve, Chesterfield, Selwyn, Walpole, Brummell and so on. But I understand the Editor was badly let down.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

MUCH ADO ABOUT MILTON

Milton and His Modern Critics. By LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH. *Oxford University Press.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

People have been saying things about Milton—things that an Elder Critic cannot allow to pass—snuffy, patronising, puppyish, ill-directed. There was Mr. Leavis. Always the literary trouble-maker, he threw off in one of his critical essays that "Milton's dislodgement in the past decade, after his two centuries of predominance, was effected with remarkably little fuss." Just who dislodged Milton, by what means, to the accompaniment of what ceremonies, nobody at the moment seems to be completely clear. But Mr. Eliot attended these mysterious rites and, in a brief valedictory speech on the fallen monarch, declared that, "after the erection of the 'Chinese wall of Milton,' blank verse has suffered not only arrest but retrogression." Elsewhere he observed that Dryden as a poet ranks far below Shakespeare and (note the nefarious cunning of the phrase!) "even below Milton." Mr. Middleton Murry and Mr. Herbert Read have also had their say, the former announcing portentously that "there is death in Milton," the latter—surely not in his most percipient vein—insisting that "Milton did not think poetically, but merely expounded thoughts in verse. . . ." Lastly, Mr. Ezra Pound, that versatile filibuster, who makes up in self-confidence all that he lacks in scholarship, has contributed some characteristic jibes, aimed at the poet's "asinine bigotry, his beastly hebraism, the coarseness of his mentality . . ." To Mr. Pearsall Smith, high on the terrace of his ivory gazebo, their discordant, contentious voices have come vaguely drifting. The result—a slender volume of protest and appreciation—is designed both as an essay in controversy and a recall to order.

The effect of the book, however, is only mildly interesting. One of two courses was open to Milton's modern champion. Either he might have embarked on a detailed analysis of these contemporary attacks, seeking to understand the point of view that has inspired them, or—better still—have attempted a fresh survey of his hero's genius. Mr. Pearsall Smith takes both courses but succeeds in pursuing neither of them very far. He gives a slight sketch of each of the offensive critics, makes some harmless fun of Mr. Pound's translations (with special reference to a particularly egregious howler that enlivened his rendering of Propertius) and darts a puzzled glance in the direction of Mr. Eliot's poetry. To *The Waste Land* he is not inclined to deny all value. That "in many ways grotesque poem" is unquestionably a work of "real importance." Eliot's erudition is much solider than that of Mr. Ezra Pound (whom his former associate, nevertheless, has described as a "very learned poet") and in *The Sacred Wood* and *Homage to John Dryden* Mr. Pearsall Smith finds "some of the best and most penetrating criticism of recent years." How odd, then, that the critic should strain at Milton, when he is

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ready and anxious to swallow Joyce! Mr. Pearsall Smith acknowledges Mr. Eliot's virtues and regrets the limitations of his critical outlook, but seems not to have grasped the relationship that exists between them. For Mr. Eliot practises criticism in the ascetic spirit. Hence his apparently unreasonable loyalties—to Mr. Pound and to Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, whom Mr. Pearsall Smith, like other readers, thinks overrated: hence the touch of puritanical perversity with which he attacks our idols. Mr. Eliot has often increased our pleasure but he distrusts enjoyment. The critical path that he prefers to tread is always hard and narrow.

Puritan and puritan have seldom agreed. And may it not have been because a certain mixture of sensibility and sternness in Milton's composition grated on a similar strain in Mr. Eliot that he is apt to write of the elder poet with such a measured approval? It is one of the paradoxes of Milton's achievement that this harsh moralist and great religious writer should survive, first and foremost, through passages of sensuous beauty, full of light, youth and clarity as a Mediteranean morning. Did not the conflict in Milton's character determine his genius? With an intense susceptibility to the charm of women went a ferocious dislike of those "fair atheists" which led him to alienate his wives and daughters, and profess views on divorce that have shocked his countrymen. His was neither a sympathetic nor a simple nature; and Mr. Pearsall Smith comes closest to the heart of his subject when he abandons the twentieth for the seventeenth century, writing of Milton as a personal and an historical problem—haughty, fastidious, fierce and arrogant, up in arms against the sensual world yet deeply loving it.

How different from the warm, protean, expansive Shakespeare! In so far as the complaints against Milton's influence have any justification—and, Mr. Eliot always excepted, none of the critics whose strictures have annoyed Mr. Pearsall Smith would appear when discussing Milton to have been at the top of their critical form—they are based on the inimitability of his poetic method. A poet's influence may be fruitful or it may be barren. He is none the less a great poet; and while Shakespeare's genius is an enormously varied and luxuriant tract from which lesser poets have stolen and borrowed for the last three hundred years, from Milton there is little that can be transplanted. Handled by other writers, his employment of foreign idiom and use of latinistic inversion becomes merely clumsy; and to this extent his work might be described as a "Chinese wall" which shut off the rich landscape of Shakespearian blank verse. Mr. Pearsall Smith loves Milton because he is a lover of language, because he has been fascinated always by the colour and rhythm of words, and Milton's conscious artistry gives his aestheticism the scope it needs. Here and there, this aestheticism seems a trifle negative; and one or two of his statements sound almost silly. ". . . The necessity of writing for one's living (he informs us on page 33) blunts the appreciation of writing when it bears the mark of perfection." Would he deny that Johnson was an excellent critic, or that Hazlitt, Coleridge, De Quincey were sensitive commentators? No critic is necessarily the worse for a private income. But literary intelligence is not the exclusive possession of the *rentier* class.

PETER QUENNELL

KIERKEGAARD

The Present Age. By SÖREN KIERKEGAARD. Trans. by ALEXANDER DRU and WALTER LOWRIE. *Oxford.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

This little book is still of interest, for two reasons: it provides a sidelight on the conventional religious position of Protestant Europe in the 'forties (we have plenty of direct lights on this subject, but fewer side ones), and it contains—like all Kierkegaard's books—surreptitious information about his own most peculiar state of mind at that time. Written at the moment when *The Corsair* had just started to launch its attack on him, its theses are underpinned by hatred of the press and public and therefore of the levelling process which those bodies represented in the evolution of nineteenth-century society. What was then rotten in the State of Denmark was, according to Kierkegaard, that religion as a form of convention had effectively replaced religion as Faith; and the reason he gives for this is the one so often found by queasy intellectuals, viz., that too much thought introduces a third term into the internal discourse, which ought to be a direct relationship, issuing immediately in action. Thus interest in Evil, as a phenomenon, replaces a direct determination to expunge it. And in an arresting metaphor he likens the men and women of his day to a clock which strikes one at every hour.

> They proudly imagine that their attitude is ironical—as though real irony were not essentially a concealed enthusiasm in a negative age (just as the hero is enthusiasm made manifest in a positive age), as though irony did not involve sacrifice, when its greatest master was put to death.

A concealed enthusiasm in a negative age: it is phrases such as this that make Kierkegaard so profound, so important a writer. What have to be discounted nowadays are the rather dull topicalities into which he elected to set his teeth, and still more perhaps the really very weird method of discourse—as it were a childish and provincial Socrates—and the utter peculiarity of his vocabulary. Here we would urge Kierkegaard's admirable translators, the next time they publish one of his works, to add a glossary in which such terms as Reason, Reflection, Superficiality, Flirtation, and so on, would be given their Kierkegaardian signification; for without some such guide the meaning is emphatically not easy to extract. Kierkegaard is a writer who achieves intensity by means of repetitiveness—the means, in fact, peculiar to sermons; but his own dialectical descriptions (one can hardly call them definitions) of the terms just mentioned do not get one any further, because they are eccentric to the point of meaninglessness.

> "By comparison with a passionate age, an age without passion gains in *scope what it loses in intensity*" (italics in the text).

The exact opposite was true of the writer himself, and that was no doubt why he found himself an exile in the Europe of his day. Certainly no more unhappy temperament can be imagined at any time; Kierkegaard would have cared still less for 1940 than he did for 1840, and we can easily imagine what biting things he would have found to say about the Nazis and (still more) his countrymen's complacent reception of them.

This volume contains, as well as the title essay, two smaller treatises: "Has a Man the Right to let Himself be put to Death for the Truth?" and "On the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," both of which beat rather aimlessly about the bush. When are we going to be given Kierkegaard's most curious and widely interesting book, *Either—Or*?

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

BY-WORDS

A Song of the Tide. By ERNEST RAYMOND. *Cassell.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

He Looked for a City. By A. S. M. HUTCHINSON. *Michael Joseph.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

Family Colouring. By MARY LUTYENS. *Michael Joseph.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

They Went to Karathia. By SUSAN GILLESPIE. *Geoffrey Bles.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

It needs great vitality to become a by-word, but it is hard luck to become a by-word on the strength of just one book, and then to write others that are much better and totally different. A number of times during the past two or three years I have tried to convince my acquaintances that Mr. Ernest Raymond's *We, the Accused* is a remarkable novel. I have never got any response except, "Ernest Raymond? Oh, *Tell England*"—and then the cold, shocked stare of the mentally superior person who is asked to admire, say, *Indian Love Lyrics*. And yet *We, the Accused is* a remarkable novel, and *A Song of the Tide*, if less successful, is at any rate worth reading.

Like *We, the Accused*, it is the story of a murder. If it fails to work up the tragic effect that the earlier novel achieved, I suspect that it is because at the last moment Mr. Raymond flinched from some of the uglier details of his story. But it is a fact that *We, the Accused* had immense advantages of setting and subject-matter. It was founded on the Crippen case, which carried with it an enormous ready-made fascination. Quite apart from the sympathy everyone feels for a man who murders his wife, it was difficult not to admire Crippen for his courage and chivalry. But more important than this was the fact that the murder took place in the stable pre-1914 world, against a background of respectability. *A Song of the Tide* belongs to modern London, to the ghastly pintable civilisation of the last ten years, with its complete collapse of all standards. In the Crippen case the detail that really shook the world was that, on the famous flight to America, Crippen's paramour was wearing trousers. How much stir would that cause nowadays? Even murder, in a world that does little else, has ceased to seem important. The best part of *A Song of the Tide*, therefore, is the earlier part, before the murder comes in sight, and the

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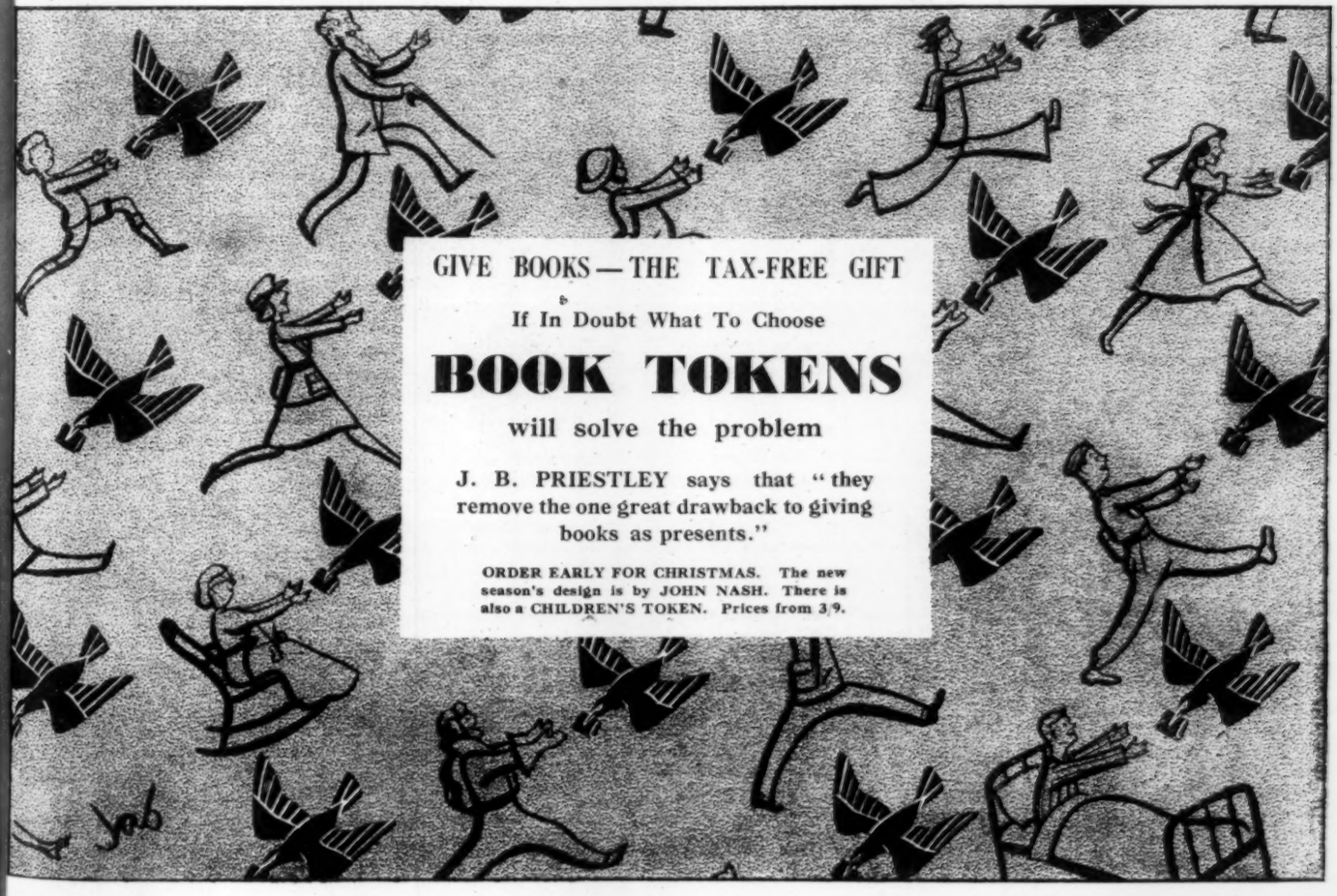
psychological background, which in my opinion Mr. Raymond has finally shrunk from developing.

The hero, Roddy Stewart, is a young man in a grocery, rather good-looking, not unintelligent, with a great urge towards "refinement" and a feeling of having "come down in the world." He claims that he is descended from the Royal Stuarts, and is half-inclined to believe what he claims. Here, of course, Mr. Raymond is at his best. The dingy South London scene, the littered wharves, the decaying plaster fronts of the boarding-houses, the furtive lovers under the railway arches, are just the kind of thing that he is fitted to describe. He has the great advantage of not being "literary," not even having a "sense of humour." Like Dreiser, he writes atrociously, but has a genuine interest in ordinary people and no repulsion from the way in which they live. Roddy, however, has another side to his nature apart from his private dream of himself as an elegant young man about town. He is a sadist. He has never heard this word, has no notion that his partiality for all-in wrestling matches has any connection with his sexual life—merely knows that he has fantasies that must not be talked about and that when he passes Brixton Jail he feels a deep sympathy with the sexual offenders within. Mixed up with this is his desire for "the ideal woman," whom he finally finds in a narcissistic little cinema usherette. Like Roddy, she has dreams of "refinement," and after a couple of years of marriage, tiring of the kind of life that is lived on two pounds ten a week, she is suddenly unfaithful with a rich young man. Roddy finds out and, rather unconvincingly, murders her. I feel reasonably certain that Mr. Raymond started out with the intention of making him commit some definitely sexual crime, probably rape, but flinched at the last moment. It was perhaps a pity. But the whole earlier part of the book, with its atmosphere of rainy streets, stewed cups of tea and advertisements of "female pills" and cures for bad legs, is excellent.

Mr. A. S. M. Hutchinson is also a by-word, and with better reason. There is no question about the vitality of those early novels, which, though people do not now care to remember it, were taken with the greatest seriousness at the time. *If Winter Comes* was the subject of long letters to the newspapers from, for instance, Lady Asquith and G. K. Chesterton. People liked it—in the immediate post-war years its popularity was only outdone by *Tarzan of the Apes*—because it was about a man who was Good. Mark Sabre, the hero, suffered one undeserved misfortune after another, and went on being Good. In this the reader could easily see a portrait of himself. Since then Mr. Hutchinson has written novels of several other kinds, but *He Looked for a City* is a return to the vein of *If Winter Comes*, though in this case there is no happy ending. The hero, a clergyman, simply spends his life in picking himself up—always with a gallant smile, of course—from a series of blows below the belt, struck by a malignant Providence. Back in 1920, this kind of thing, written with the horrible quivering "tenderness" that Mr. Hutchinson has made so peculiarly his own, seemed deeply moving. I do not prophesy the same success for this novel as for the earlier one, if only because individual perfection now seems less important and the struggles of vicars with stipends of only £700 a year less impressive. But Mr. Hutchinson's powers have not deserted him. Anyone wanting a good cry might do worse than *He Looked for a City*.

Both *Family Colouring* and *They Went to Karathia* are astonishingly pointless books. Such books are only written and read because the belief in aristocratic virtues tends to persist so long as there are such things as "private" incomes. Some people, it is felt, justify their existence simply by possessing complicated emotions. They toil not neither do they spin, but their reasons for marrying and divorcing one another are more subtle than those of bricklayers. *Family Colouring* is concerned almost exclusively with marriages and divorces. Its two heroines are the third and fourth wives of an attractive but wayward aristocrat who goes mad and shoots himself in the last chapter. There is a strong "last-of-his-line" motif, and the book ends with the fourth wife procuring herself a bastard by somebody with the same coloured hair (hence the title), whom she proposes to pass off as the heir to the family estates. From time to time there are melancholy reflections on the future and on the fact that as a result of the war "all this" will pass away ("all this" means tea on the lawn and nectarines from your own glasshouse), but, in general, the spiritual superiority of the dividend-drawing class is taken for granted.

They Went to Karathia is at bottom the same kind of thing, though written in a more distinguished style. The action takes place somewhere in Northern India, presumably Kashmir, and such plot as the book possesses is about a spiritually superior young woman married to a man who is "not worthy of her" and who has, in fact, come to India because he has been mixed up in a jewel robbery of the "Mayfair Men" type. However, he commits suicide in time to allow her to marry the hero. The "lovely-old-country-house" motif is well to the fore, the heroine having ever since childhood had recurrent dreams of a country house which she now knows so well that she can draw it from memory. Needless to say, this is the house that has just been inherited by the hero. When one looks at novels of this kind, so spiritually flaccid, so lacking in any kind of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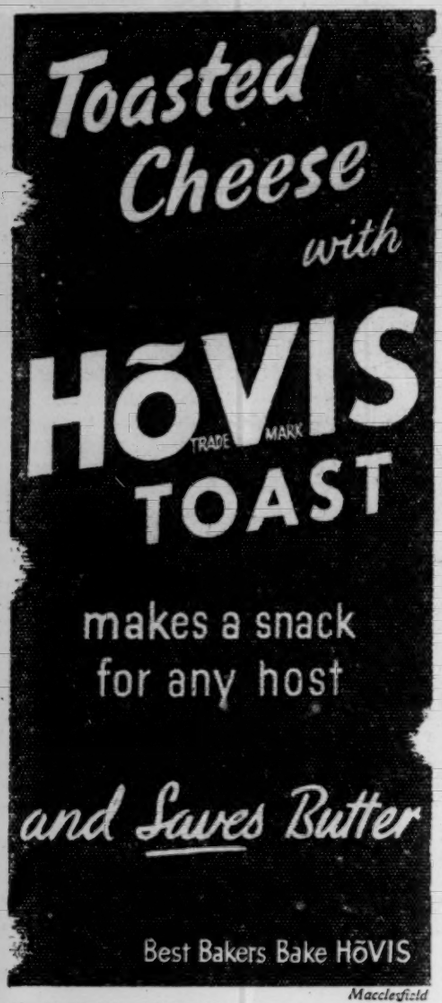

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purpose, artistic or political, one sees that they can only be produced because large pockets of the pre-war mind are still in existence. It seems almost incredible, after the bombs. However, fear not, times are changing, taxes are rising, and within a year from now, even if the submarines have not forced us to do all our writing on brick tablets, the novel about people with pale sensitive faces in lovely old country houses will have gone to join the dodo and the plesiosaurus.

GEORGE ORWELL

THE PAST TENSE

Selected Poems : Henry Newbolt. *Nelson.* 2s.

Mr. John Betjeman in introducing a new selection of Newbolt's poems speaks of "his highly original qualities as a poet," and gently scolds "modern literary people" for underestimating him. A fair re-reading of Newbolt may, it is true, be difficult for this generation. His patriotic verse is a strand in the less amiable recollections of early childhood : his nautical poems carry echoes of stiff-shirted baritones whose leaden gestures emphasise the manly beat : his contemplative poems . . . ? Mr. Betjeman decides to leave most of them out while asserting that they represent "his finest phase." But the evidence he supplies is not very convincing ; he instances as "one of his best poems in his latest style, with its subtle metre," a poem about a coachman :

> Past seven o'clock : time to be gone ;
> Twelfth night's over and dawn shivering up :
> A hasty cut of the loaf, a steaming cup,
> Down to the door, and there is Coachman John.
> . . . . . .
> "When you come to consider the moon," says John at last
> And stops to feel his footing and take his stand ;
> "And then there's some will say there's never a hand
> That made the world!" A flick and the gates are passed.
> Out of the dim magical moonlit park,
> Out of the workday world and wider skies :
> There's a warm flush in the East where day's to rise,
> And I'm feeling the better for Coachman John's remark.

The three missing verses are neither worse nor better than these, and one is left wondering why such a poem should be talked of in terms of "latest and finest phases" and "subtle metres." Mr. Betjeman is a curious sport of the Twenty-ish cultivation of Taste. Conscious, perhaps, of the emasculating effect of inbreeding, he proceeded, not to graft on a new stock, but simply to reverse positions ; and he (among others) successfully persuaded the really tasteful to widen their categories. His studied cultivation of the second-rate became something more than an inverted snobbery : it produced a small body of genuine poetry, sharp and nostalgic. And it doesn't matter much if he persuaded a few of the richer classes to Victorianise their parlours or derive a frisson from nineteenth century Gothic.

But it might be a pity if he persuaded schoolteachers—for school children are going to be the people who chiefly suffer from this affectation—to pump into their pupils continuous doses of nineteenth century Public School uplift. Newbolt's hearty martial rhymes will long continue to find a response among very small schoolboys. Even a communist England would, one imagines, in its Nationalist phase revive "Admirals All" and "Drake's Drum," the latter as part of its regionalist propaganda. But, as Mr. Betjeman hints, Newbolt was above all a moral poet ; he was the voice of the Public Schools at the one time when they were giving a vocational training in leadership appropriate to life as it was. The Head Prefect really did become the Head Sahib : niggers instead of newbugs became the objects of his high principled, right-handed justice : and he may even have been hero-worshipped by the second lot as he had been by the first. The virtues, themselves, we shall appreciate more justly when we are no longer suffering disasters from their complementary defects. But it is idle to pretend that they have worked up into good poetry—at best Newbolt uses them to make neatly expressed gnomic verse. And it is the paraphernalia in which the lessons are dressed up that has now quite faded.

"Commemoration" was for Newbolt the most evocative word in the English language ; and never more so than in its connection with School. Yet who to-day could take a school prize day seriously ? The incongruous flowers in the gravy-odoured dining-hall : the usually hated parents now flattered like shareholders by the chairman at the annual meeting : the scrubbed and groomed schoolboys, openly contemptuous of the prize-winners' industry, ironically approving of the school rake who is awarded a shield for devotion to duty : and high above all on the dais, where the Headmaster, thumbs in the armholes of waistcoat, congratulates himself on his management of a great society, sit those sad relics, the school governors—three rows of decaying peers, sclerotic generals and disappointed, ex-headmaster bishops, believing it all—or as much of it as they can hear.

Newbolt, of course, would have seen behind the decay their virtues and achievements. He would have praised them in the past tense. It is better to write of Newbolt like that, too. He was "an excellent conversationalist, a good scholar . . . fearless and high-principled" ; he was a generous critic, generous to younger poets whose methods and aims were entirely antithetic to his. But it is mere affectation to try to bring him into the present as a contemplative poet of highly original qualities. Why does Mr. Betjeman do it ? Possibly because he knows that the Public School stuff is already "period" ; and there is nothing so tasty as being the first to make a period fashionable.

T. C. WORSLEY

INSIDE THE ATOM

The World and the Atom. By C. M. MOLLER and EBBE RASMUSSEN. *Allen and Unwin.* 10s. 6d.

This popular account of subatomic physics ought really to be reviewed by a physicist and a layman in collaboration. How accurate it is I cannot say ; but its authors are two eminent Danish physicists, and the foreword is by Niels Bohr.

From the layman's point of view the book is a remarkably intelligible description of radioactivity, the atom's electron system, and the atomic nucleus. Of course even the most quick-witted of lay readers will probably, if he is quite honest, have to admit that he sometimes sees only through a glass darkly. Modern physical theory cannot be thoroughly grasped, even in its general import, without more mathematics and more information than can be packed into a popular volume. And even in this exceptionally lucid book there are one or two points mainly in Part II, where the lay reader may reasonably feel that he might have been given just a little more help—for instance at the first mention of Plank's constant, and over Dirac's theory. But the book is free from difficult mathematics. Even the reader who feels himself in danger of passing into a trance whenever he sees an equation ought to find much of interest in it.

The story is an exciting detective story in which the clues fit together with precision and elegance. There is some danger that the reader may be given an exaggerated idea of the neatness

and finish of modern physics, since many false trails and unsettled disputes are perforce omitted. The physical theory of indeterminacy is described very clearly, but there is only a faint echo of the philosophical controversies which have arisen from it. Similarly, though the story tells of far-reaching revolution it does not, perhaps, sufficiently emphasise that the new fundamental concepts cannot be properly represented by any familiar mechanical visual imagery. In fact, all is perhaps a little *too* beautiful in the garden.

The translation reads easily. The cloud-chamber photographs are very illuminating.

OLAF STAPLEDON

About Motoring

ROAD CASUALTIES IN WARTIME

THE completed statistics of road accidents for the past year show a 25 per cent. increase in deaths. No sort of analysis has been published, and it is doubtful whether the authorities have found time to explore in private the causation of the increase. Since the main cause of the pre-war fatalities was congestion in its various aspects, a substantial diminution might be expected when so many vehicles have been laid up for the duration, and the majority of privately owned cars are limited by the petrol ration to 200 miles per month. That no such diminution has occurred is ascribed by competent people to three main causes:

(i) The black-out.
(ii) Undisciplined driving of "labelled" cars, engaged in various forms of national service.
(iii) Exaggerated congestion in munition areas.

When leisure for analysis is available, the black-out will certainly be identified as the main culprit. Every driver on the road is bursting with fierce criticisms of the existing blackout regulations for motor lamps, but only from the absolute standpoint. On the practical side motorists wisely bow to the experts of the R.A.F. These experts early decided that if we were to cut out gratuitous assistance to the navigators of the *Luftwaffe*, motor-car headlamps must be restricted to very small beams. Experimental observation from the air soon showed that the resultant yellow pool on the road must be very tiny indeed, if urban traffic was not to serve the Germans as a beacon at night. This consideration imposed a single headlamp; a bulb of limited power; and a method of shortening the beam. Test flights at low altitudes further revealed that on a clear night from about 1,000ft. even a single weak headlamp betrayed an urban or built-up area by illuminating the sides of houses and shops. Somebody or other decided rather foolishly that there would be a great deal of low flying over Britain by enemy planes, and the official beam was consequently sliced off horizontally at 3ft. from ground level. This stupid enactment relieved all road-users from their ancient foe of dazzle, but it has already killed hundreds of folk most unnecessarily. No doubt, if it were practicable to start afresh, cars would be equipped with a switch to reduce light and obtain the cut-off when the sirens sound, and be protected a better—and especially a higher—other times. It is too late to attempt reform, but we cannot survey with the high road death-rate, even if ment finds comfort in the fact that time worse than the air-raid simple safeguards are possible, stantially effective. The first informed of their position can no longer see the edges any certainty by night, especially in light mist, or when the edge consists of turf flush with the concrete; and every rural pedestrian is familiar with the horrid experience of flattening his body against hedge or wall on the approach of a car which is wandering about the road in the gloom. White lines, continuous or broken, painted on the road surface, would enable any driver to keep station in almost any weather. So far, white lines are only used on corners and along narrow roads which wind a little; and even these lines are often so faded that they are barely visible in broad daylight. Every council, civic or rural, should be circularised forthwith by the Ministry of Transport, and requested to repaint all white lines in its area at least twice a year, and to extend their application to straight roads wherever funds permit.

If it is desirable that the motorist should be enabled to follow his correct track along a road, it is equally desirable that he should be able to sight pedestrians in time to take avoiding action. Remember that with the 3ft. cut-off of his headlamp beam, he cannot hope to sight any portion of an adult pedestrian above the hips. The nether half of almost all pedestrians is clad on winter nights in some darkish colour. Since motor-car lamps are not orthochromatic, tarred road—black boots—brown boots—khaki slacks—brick walls—green grass—thorn hedges—blue, black and brown skirts—all look exactly the same colour and are all equally invisible, unless silhouetted against a very light background. White is the only colour which retains its tone value in the light of our headlamps. It follows that the pedestrian's best safeguard is to wear white *low down* on his body, as in the form of a 2in. hem of white calico round the edge of the skirt of a trench coat. Any white object within 3ft. of road

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR CALLING!

Winter in Captivity

The Secretary for War has now confirmed in the House of Commons that there are 44,000 British Prisoners of War—the vast majority being in German hands.

From their prison camps the men send a call to their fellow-countrymen NOT TO FORGET THEM. Most of the prisoners suffered great strain and privation in the days following the battle of France and Flanders, but it is the monotony of life "behind barbed wire" that the men find hardest to bear, especially with the long winter months before them. It was to meet this need that the British Prisoners of War Books and Games Fund was founded shortly after the outbreak of war. The work of the Fund is two-fold:

1 We send books, games, sports equipment, music and gramophones to the prison camps, so that the men can organise libraries, concerts, team games, etc., to keep up their spirits.

2 An important branch of our work is to send *individual* parcels to the prisoners. Past experience has shown how eagerly men in captivity look forward to receiving parcels *personally addressed* to them. We send each Prisoner of War, as soon as his name and number reach us, a first "Capture" parcel, containing the Oxford Little Bible, a set of chess and draughts, a novel or "thriller" and a pack of playing cards, together with a printed postcard on which the men are asked to state their *own preferences* (whether for light or serious reading) for future monthly parcels. A careful record is kept to avoid duplication and in this way the men have the advantage of a first class circulating library combined with a "personal touch" which serves as a link with home.

An Appeal

In this constructive work of remembrance ALL can share—helping men who have lost their liberty in our service to a tolerable existence during their enforced exile from home. Our work depends entirely on voluntary subscriptions, and the great increase in the number of prisoners has imposed a severe strain upon the Fund. We earnestly appeal to readers of THE NEW STATESMAN to respond as generously as possible to this appeal, so that no prisoner need be overlooked or forgotten. Please complete and return the form below to

Sir HUGH WALPOLE, *Chairman*, or
Miss CHRISTINE KNOWLES,
Founder and Director.

Will YOU adopt a Prisoner?

Will you help by "adopting" one or more of our men who are Prisoners of War in Germany? For 5/- a month the Fund will keep him supplied with regular parcels of books and games of his own choice, individually addressed, in your name. £1 a month will "adopt" four prisoners. Readers of THE NEW STATESMAN will not need to be told what such parcels mean to men in captivity!

★ Clergy, Headmasters, Officers of Political Associations and Trade Unions and others in a position to do so will greatly assist by opening a subscription list or earmarking the proceeds of a collection or function for the Fund.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If you are interested in a particular prisoner, please attach to this form a sheet of paper giving his name, camp number and other details. If desired, parcels will then be sent in your name.

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Miss CHRISTINE KNOWLES,
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level is a help—a white walking stick, even white socks with the trousers turned well up, a white fox terrier on a lead, a white cycle-type reflector fixed to the heel of the boot.

We are all such slaves of fashion that we hesitate to adopt any unusual article of body wear. We who survive have so far escaped figuring in the road casualty list. But every reader who frequents country roads devoid of footpaths would be wise to adopt some such precaution as is here suggested.

R. E. DAVIDSON

Week-end Competitions

No. 562

Set by Thomas Smallbones

A personal column advertisement the other week mentioned "a high brow with low brow virtues." High brow, low brow, virtue, vice . . . ! The usual prizes are offered for a fantasia on this theme. A 300-word limit is the only restriction.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, c/o Cornwall Press, 1-6 Paris Garden, Stamford Street, S.E.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, November 25th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 560

Set by Fred Oyster

We offer the usual prizes of two guineas and half-a-guinea for a Black-out Blues. Words only, limit 20 lines.

Report by Fred Oyster

Partly, perhaps, because I should find it difficult to give an exact definition myself, I decided in advance not to take a purist line about what is and what isn't a Blues. How often, then, a long line should appear or a refrain be repeated shan't bother me any more than it has competitors. There is a limit, however, of tolerance, and a madrigal or two as well as mock ballads in the Plomer style and straight lyrics of lament have had to be ruled out. In some cases, regretfully; for both those who kept to the rules (such as they are) and those who broke them have succeeded in being exceptionally lively.

Gather round, folks, while I tell the tale
Of lovers two and a Banshee Wail;
Listen how a love so white and true
Was turned to a gloomy blackout blue.

Bill was a Red of the deepest hue
And Lil, his girl, had a Left-wing view,
So they went in true communion
To hear talks of Soviet Union.

In another competition asking for a modern sardonic ballad, Edward H. Owen would certainly qualify for a prize. It's a pity I must rule him out of mine. His "sorry story" reaches a climax with the lines:

So cruel Lil did her man the yellow
Took up chess with a Tory fellow.

Another sorry story was provided by "Olric," who also, however, did not capture the idiom or tone of a Blues. Here are his second and third verses:

Though many think I'm cute
I'm a simple prostitute,
But Hitler doesn't give a girl her dues:
It isn't him I'm funking
But the thought of no debunking
Till we've finished with the Black-out Blues.

My Ma, she likes the Blitz
'Cos she's living at the Ritz,
And so should I if I were in her shoes:
But you can't begin to sin
Till it's time to black-in
So I'm weary of the Black-out Blues.

These were the best of those who failed to qualify. Among the entries which I regard as possible or at any rate near-Blues there are so many that it has been a difficult task weeding them out. They range from negro dirge to slick slow jazz, from film sentiment to more complex literary effect. Edgar Holt began his Blues with a brilliant originality:

"Put out—the light
And then put out the light";
Othello got it right
And Desdemona couldn't choose,
She'd got to do the Black-out Blues.

That—and especially the syncopation of the first two lines—is delicious, and if the rest of his verses had come anywhere near the same level I shouldn't have hesitated to give him a prize. There is no space to quote other runners-up—many of whom, by the way, hit off a tender howl with more than professional glee. I have had to divide the prizes equally among three contributors. "Cestrian" gets closest to the original Blues, and "S. K." to its Pan Alley variant; Richard Pomfret falls somewhere between. In merit, it doesn't seem to me there's a great deal to choose.

BLACK-OUT BLUES

I

When the sirens wail as darkness falls with night,
When the sirens wail as darkness falls with night;
Then trouble's takin' place in this man's town to-night.

Six time bombs fell so I can't even get into my house,
Six time bombs fell so I can't even get into my house;
We're shelter-hoppin' . . . maybe en route for Paradise.

I'm just an' old coloured girl who don't know what she's gonna do,
I'm just an' old coloured girl who don't know what she's gonna do;
And there's thousands of people ain't got no place to go.

Down in the dockland the bombs is killin' my friends,
Down in the dockland the bombs is killin' my friends;
'Cause the white man can't figure no better ways to live.

Black-out blues sure done got me an' I'm flat down in the dumps,
Black-out blues sure done got me an' I'm flat down in the dumps;
'Cause my house is blown down and I can't live there no more.

I can't live there no more.
I can't live there no more.

So Lawd get me away from this mad an' bloody town;
An' maybe I can lose those mean old black-out blues.

"CESTRIAN"

II

Ah got those Black-out Blues,
Mah heart's right in mah shoes,
Jes' hearken to that News,
Ah's blacksy, ah's bluesy.

Ah ain't got no swell torch,
There ain't no cabin porch,
No rhythm's got that scorch,
Ah's blacksy, ah's bluesy.

Ah jes' can't rest in bed,
Mah prayers is no good said,
Mah sugar thinks ah's dead,
Ah's blacksy, ah's bluesy.

Ah's burnt mah rockin'-chair,
The kinks have left mah hair,
Mah head's so full of care,
Ah's blacksy, ah's bluesy.

O Lawdy, shine dat light,
Jes' make dis black-out bright,
Ah can't tell wrong from right,
Ah's blacksy, ah's bluesy.

RICHARD POMFRET

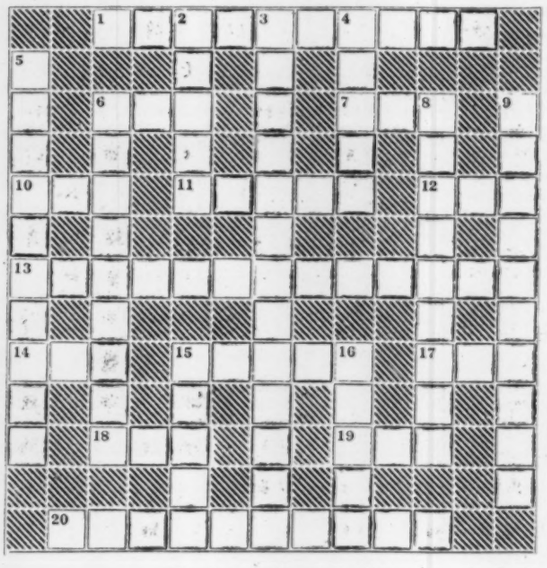
III

Black-out blonde . . . gotta get that black-out blonde!
Met her when the sirens sang
Met her when the searchlights sprang
Into the sky—
O my, O my, O my-hy!
Gotta get that black-out blonde.
Right
Into the depth of the night
A raider dropped a flare but I only saw her hair
Shining like the moon and sun . . .
The mischief's done:
Gotta get that black-out blonde!

S. K.

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 7

Set by V. S.



The last week's winner is:

Charles S. Hardiman, Thackeray Hotel, Gt. Russell St., W.C.1

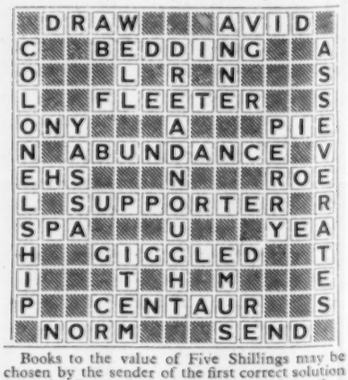
ACROSS

1. Puck often gets the bird but he's not a bad chap. (10).
6 and 7. The dog has a bet about another animal. (6).
7. See 6.
10. Looking back with a born poet's eyes. (3).
11. Due to 8 this evening. (5).
12. Most of the riddle can be answered with ease? (3).
13. Two donkeys in a ring — how killing! (13).
14. I had a shorter name for the girl. (3).
15. Pale as a pullet, perhaps. (5).
17. The whole bill or just the account for tea. (3).
18. Andiron or copper King. (3).
19. *Rev.* It has branches in Chelmsford. (3).
20. A gentleman is a bit short but post free (4 hyphen 6).

DOWN

2. The sort of attack to make on 7. (5).
3. The main purpose of ark lamps. (2 words 5 and 8).
4. Star-finder who made his name in the French firmament. (5).
5. Herbaceous boarder? (10).
6. Does the orchestra *shun* musical chairs? (4 hyphen 5).
8. End by getting tailless ermine in the gallery. (9).
9. Father's age is about eight. (10).
15. It may be right to fish. (5).
16. Ladies only in name. (5).

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD



Books to the value of Five Shillings may be chosen by the sender of the first correct solution opened. Post solutions to arrive not later than first delivery Wednesday following the date of issue, addressed to "CROSSWORDS," "NEW STATESMAN AND NATION," c/o Cornwall Press, Paris Garden, Stamford Street, London, S.E.1.

THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By CYNICUS

THE RISE IN EQUITIES—THE COMING NEW WAR LOAN—STEEL SHARES.

THERE is talk that the further recovery in equity shares this week on the Stock Exchange should be regarded as a sign that the investor cannot live on the low yields of the gilt-edged market. I notice that the *Investors Chronicle*, for example, inflames this talk by suggesting that an investment in the high yielding equity shares invariably turns out better than an investment in the lower yielding market leaders. Personally, I think this talk is nonsense. No private investor would expect to live on the interest from Government bonds unless he were an idle millionaire beyond the feeling of shame. The net redemption yields, after tax at 8*s.* 6*d.*, are already below 2 per cent. for the majority of Government stocks. If there is to be much further rise in the cost of living the petty rentier may begin to contemplate the horrible prospect of being snuffed out of existence, but if he turns for help to equity shares for a higher income he will run the awful risk of depreciation of capital at the end of this war. There are very few equity shares whose future can be viewed with absolute confidence. Indeed, if there are any to be found the dividend yield offered will probably be not more than 2 per cent. above that on 2½ per cent. Consols. But I do not think that the investor is thinking in terms of income yield at all. He is thinking in terms of work and war effort. He knows that the nation can only benefit by the investment of new savings. His job is, therefore, to increase his earnings from work, not his income from bonds or shares.

* * *

It interested me to find my recent reflections upon the gilt-edged market supported by a well-known firm of London stockbrokers. In a circular letter to their clients they suggest that an announcement of a new issue of a medium or long-term war loan calculated to appeal to insurance companies is imminent. The fact that the minimum price of 2½ per cent. National War Bonds is fixed at 100 and that the near approach of the first interest date virtually removes any advantage in buying these bonds in the market as against applying for them at "the tap" is making this issue rapidly unmarketable. In discussing the terms of the probable new issue from the point of view of the insurance companies this firm of stockbrokers regard it as likely that a 3 per cent. yield basis will be offered. If a yield basis of less than 3 per cent. were offered a further rise in prices might be expected, but they argue that with the present high rate of taxation a further forcing down of interest rates would be calculated to produce an excessive "short" position in the market, which would be a dangerous situation for the Government. The upshot of this argument is that the cheapest stocks in the gilt-edged market, pending the new issue, are the virtually irredeemable issues, namely, 2½ per cent. Consols and Local Loans, as the following table indicates :

	Present Price	Flat Yield %
2½% Consols	75¼	£3 6 0
Local Loans 3%	88⅛	£3 8 3

An exchange into these irredeemable from some of the low-yielding dated stocks might be considered. For example :

	Present Price	Flat	Yield % Adjusted Gross Redemption
3% National Defence Loan 1954/58 ...	101¼	£2 19 3	£2 16 9
3% War Loan, 1955/59	100⅛	£2 19 6	£2 18 6

3½% War Loan and 3½% Conversion Loan are also unattractive above par, although the former will probably always remain the best market on the Stock Exchange.

What surprised me in the recent buying of building material shares—bricks and cements—was that steel shares were neglected. I have already expressed the opinion that the market had carried London Brick, Associated Portland and British Portland Cement too high, and I would suggest to investors who want to increase their income that they might exchange into United Steel Companies £1 shares at 21*s.* which are at about the same price as they were twelve months ago. If they wish to spread their risk they might consider also Thomas W. Ward, another company which should do well not only during the war but in peacetime reconstruction. The dividends and yields are as follows :

	Price	High 1937 %	Last Earned %	Last Paid %	Dividend Yield %
United Steel Cos. £1	21/–	34/6	8.7	8.0	7.6
Thos. W. Ward £1	23/–	39/–	13.3	11.25	9.8

Thos. W. Ward are the experts in dismantling ships and in dealing with scrap. They are also cement and brick manufacturers and quarry owners, and they have spread their bombing risk by owning 43 works scattered throughout the country. But neither United Steel nor Thomas Ward have such a steady record as Associated Portland Cement.

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

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tes and all information on page 504

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